

Now new Labour means never having to be embarrassed

It is instructive to watch a politician when he's in the wrong and knows it. Qualities never tested in victory are called for. This was when Margaret Thatcher was at her most magnificent — and preposterous.

Yesterday we saw a new Prime Minister tested in the same way. There have been few occasions when Tony Blair has been on his back foot in the Commons for so long. This Prime Minister's Questions was one of them. At the crease facing William

Hague's bowling, Mr Blair was thrown on to the defensive.

But he was not stumped down, but not out. There is no doubt who won the exchange: Mr Hague did: he had a marvellous afternoon. But behind the headline — "Hague lays into Blair" — there is a quieter observation to be made: call it mettle or brass neck, but Blair sticks to his guns even when he's out-gunned.

Bereft of argument, cornered into the possible loss of

a Government Bill, and cruelly mocked by the Tory Leader, Blair stayed on his feet. This took nerve, Blair had it.

Hague went straight in. How many Government backbenchers had spoken in favour of the "closed list" for the European elections? Blair had to dodge the question, the answer being "one". Through-out what followed, Blair ducked and weaved but never regained the initiative.

Hague was funny. Blair was grim. Hague told him to get advice on answering ques-

tions from "one of those Chinese mystics" he consulted (rich, from someone unashamedly into transcendental meditation). Blair told Hague he needed help from his new image consultant (rich, from one who makes image-management a political creed).

Blair was forced to rely on two defences: railing at heredi-

tary peers, and insisting that closed list systems are very common in Europe. By the end the Tories were cheering Hague more than Labour was cheering Blair. Hague left to another cheer: Blair to none. I was struck by the picture of a Prime Minister reduced to shouting at an Opposition Leader "No, he is wrong. He is wrong!" — and silence behind him.

But I was also struck by his stammer, a kind of shamelessness, but impressive for all that. It was Paddy Ashdown and his Liberal Democrats who squirmed.

The "Personal Statement" later was another example of new Labour's implied "OK I'm wrong — so what are you going to do about it?" Journalists had been abuzz with excitement at the promised mea culpa from the Paymaster General, Geoffrey Robinson.

In the event the confession took 24 seconds. To suggest that for Mr Robinson the occasion seemed less than traumatic is to understate.

He read out the financial interests he had forgotten to declare. He might as well have been reading out a luncheon menu. At the end, Robinson apologised rather as one might say sorry when one's supermarker is loaded with champagne and truffles bumps another in Waitrose.

And he sat down. That was it. No, he was not going to re-

sign. No, he was not available for questions on the subject. The affair was closed. It was not a problem. Being a Labour minister is never having to say you're embarrassed. New Labour, no sweat.

Only a brave speech later by Bill Michie (Lab, Sheffield, Heeley) a leftwinger rebelling against the closed list, suggested there are Government MPs who still know how to blurb. But then Mr Michie has nothing to lose... has he? Surely they couldn't take away his seat... could they?



MATTHEW PARRIS
POLITICAL SKETCH

Court backs jail damages for fine defaulters

HUNDREDS of fine defaulters won the go-ahead in the High Court yesterday to begin compensation claims against magistrates who unlawfully jailed them.

The court outlined errors made by magistrates' courts all over the country in thousands of cases when dealing with fine defaulters. Many were jailed: the higher courts subsequently held they should not have been.

Despite messages sent by Parliament over the past 20 years, Lord Justice Brooke said, magistrates had failed to treat jail as a "last resort". The court's decision to overturn jail terms imposed on six fine defaulters — three of them single mothers and one owing only £10 — clears the way for hundreds to claim compensation to claim compensation for unlawful imprisonment, Richard Wise, a lawyer who with his brother, Ian, has handled many of the cases, said that he was already dealing with 500 claims and there may be more.

Lord Justice Brooke said it had been estimated that an average of 22,500 fine defaulters were jailed each year by magistrates between 1992 and 1995. That has fallen to 8,500 a year in the wake of criticisms of JPs by the higher courts.

Mr Wise's West Midlands firm, HMB Law, had been at the forefront of the battle to

ment had to have been tried without success before a jail term was justified.

The court successes scored by HMB Law had achieved the "salutary result" of greatly reducing the numbers of fine defaulters sent to prison by magistrates, he added.

Lord Justice Brooke ruled "with regret" that the court had no power to substitute lesser sentences for those imposed by the magistrates in general although he "willingly" overturned the sentences in the six cases before the court.

The decision means that each case will have to come before the High Court for a hearing and even if their jail terms are quashed, defaulters will still be open to further enforcement action over unpaid fines.

Richard Wise said that those fine defaulters who had challenged their jail sentences in the courts could now make damages claims. He said there were tens of thousands of people who had been jailed unlawfully but could not seek compensation because they had not sought a judicial review of the magistrates' decision.

If the fine defaulters pursue their claims, the Government could find itself with a bill running to many thousands of pounds in compensation.

A fine defaulter who is jailed for a week might be able to claim up to £400.

Frances Gibb on a ruling that affects hundreds of people who were wrongly imprisoned

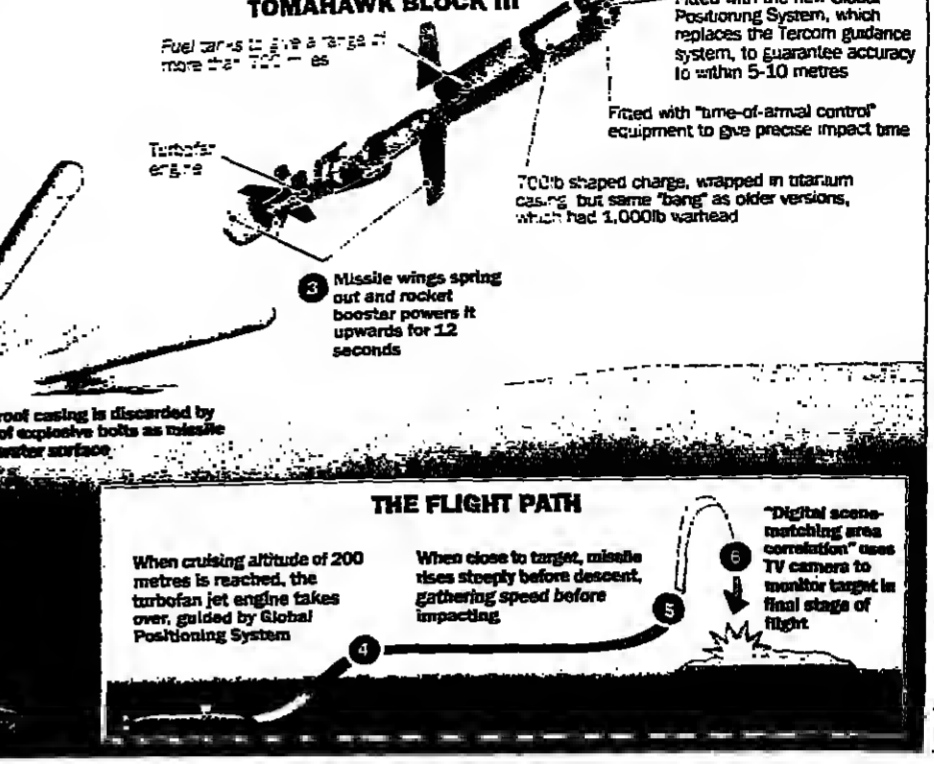
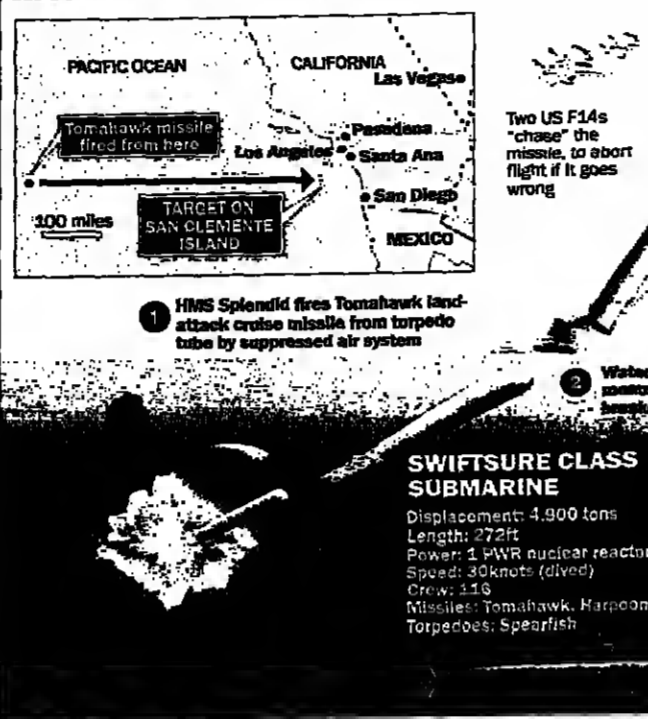
free unlawfully jailed defaulters and had fought numerous cases through the courts, he added.

In some cases magistrates had sent defaulters aged under 21 to prison — when the law specifically stated they should be sent only to young offenders' institutions — and prison authorities had "turned a Nelsonian blind eye" when accepting them into custody.

The judge added: "People were being locked up when they should not have been and some enterprising prison establishments had been examining justices' warrants very carefully on receiving fine defaulters into their already crowded establishments."

The judge, sitting with Mr Justice Sedley, said there were many ways of dealing with fine defaulters — including attachment of earnings orders and fine supervision orders — and every method of enforce-

HMS SPLENDID FIRES FIRST UK TOMAHAWK



Fighting fund for grammar schools

A NATIONAL campaign to preserve the remaining grammar schools will be launched in the new year, just as opponents attempt to collect sufficient signatures to force the first parental ballots on their abolition.

The National Grammar Schools Association is planning a fighting fund, with a website to circulate information on local campaigns. Several groups of schools have already begun to seek support for selective education from parents and local communities. In Kent, which has the largest number of grammar schools, parents are being asked for a £12 subscription to a county-wide campaign. Eric Hammond, a former leader of the Electicians' Union, is acting as the spokesman for Support Kent Schools, which claims that compre-

Navy tests its first armed Tomahawk

Continued from page 1

fired in anger on Baghdad four days ago by the US Navy. The Americans also have a 1,000-mile range Tomahawk, which is fired from surface warships.

The Tomahawk fired by HMS *Splendid* was successfully programmed to hit its target after flying for most of the at an altitude of about 200 metres. It can fly at below 100ft.

For the last part of the flight, the missile was guided by a digital "scene-matching area correlation" system, under which a computer-stored image of the target is compared with the scene on the ground, viewed through a television camera.

Throughout the flight, it was "chased" by two American F14s. An Orion P3 maritime reconnaissance aircraft also watched the flight. The F14s were in a position to abort the flight by a data-link command signal if the Tomahawk veered off course.

The missile rose steeply from its low altitude as it approached the target before rolling over and dropping with gathering speed on to the simulated communications facility.

The armory of cruise missiles will enable the Royal Navy to play a joint role in the future with the US Navy in any proposed Tomahawk attacks on targets in Iraq if another crisis develops.

The Ministry of Defence said that the US Federal Aviation Authority had warned all commercial aircraft of the Tomahawk test flight.

If the extradition process continues — the Spanish investigating judge, Baltasar Garçon, has filed his formal extradition request with the Home Office — General Pinochet will make an appearance before Bow Street magistrates court on December 2. By the same date, Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, must have made his decision on whether the process should proceed.

Pinochet hopes for freedom on his birthday

GENERAL Augusto Pinochet will learn on Wednesday whether he has been spared from the threat of extradition to Spain on charges of genocide, torture and terrorism.

Five law lords will give their ruling in the House of Lords on the appeal, brought on behalf of the Spanish authorities by the Crown Prosecution Service, against the High Court decision on October 28 that the general has sovereign immunity from arrest.

If they uphold the High Court's ruling, he will almost certainly be free to fly home to Chile. If they overturn the lower court's decision, a potentially lengthy extradition process will follow.

By coincidence, Wednesday is the 83rd birthday of the former Chilean dictator, who is recovering from back surgery at the private Grovelands Priory Hospital in North London.

Alun Jones, QC, for the CPS, told the law lords that

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Policeman sues for cost of Viagra

A FORMER Irish policeman invalidated out of the force after a beating began a court claim yesterday for compensation so that he could buy the anti-impotence drug Viagra.

Philip Purcell, 45, from Dublin, was ordered to retire by the Irish Police Commissioner, Pat Byrne, last year after being attacked and injured during an Irish football match in Dublin's Croke Park stadium in 1994.

In the Irish High Court Mr Purcell said he had suffered from an erectile dysfunction as a result of a post-traumatic stress. He had undergone medical treatment for his loss of libido, but did not believe he had been cured, and found that Viagra tablets had proved less stressful.

Mr Purcell told the court he intended to use the tablets in future and he considered he might need two or three tablets a week.

The case will be decided at a later date.

Charges over Net paedophile ring

SEVEN men were charged last night in connection with an alleged international paedophile ring operating on the Internet.

The men, arrested in Britain during a global police operation, were charged with conspiracy to distribute indecent images of children and are due to appear before magistrates in Hastings, East Sussex, in January.

Two months ago officers led by the National Crime Squad simultaneously raided alleged suspects' homes in 12 countries, including Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Finland, Austria, Belgium and the United States. The operation — codenamed Cather-

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The men who had to give up their seats

IT WAS one of the greatest challenges that the women's sub-committee had faced in ten years. Their two new members were men.

With the law on their side, Paul Ingram, of the Green Party, and Steve Goddard, a Liberal Democrat, hoped to become the first men on the committee at Labour-run Oxford City Council after they were nominated by their parties. But a frosty reception at their first meeting when members voted "not to welcome them" brought them to a halt.

A woman has since resigned in protest at the committee's sexism. Both men had been sent out for 20 minutes while members discussed them at the meeting on Monday night. Those in favour of letting them stay included the chairman, Mary Clarkson, a working mother, and another Labour member. But Mrs Clarkson said that the majority were

Sexism row as council women force out two newcomers, reports Helen Johnstone

against. She said: "The women's committee is an opportunity for women to exchange information. Some of the co-opted members felt they would be more comfortable discussing very sensitive issues if men were not present."

The sub-committee, set up in the mid-1980s to represent women's interests in Oxford, has campaigned on a range of issues, including support for victims of domestic violence. It is made up of four women

councillors and more than a dozen non-elected co-opted members. The latter include representatives of women students, single mothers, pensioners and ethnic minorities. Sources suggested that the co-opted members who swung the vote include several arch feminists. The rejected Mr Goddard, 29, who teaches French literature at the university, said yesterday: "I don't know whether the group is full of feminists or not. I was not in there long enough."

Critics of the decision, including some within the committee, said that if men did the same thing there would be uproar. Jackie Gray, a Liberal Democrat councillor and a mother of two, has resigned, saying the concept of excluding elected representatives purely because of their sex was completely absurd. "These two men represent hundreds of women in their wards," she said. "This is not practising equal opportunities."

The committee rejected a compromise by both men to leave when sensitive issues were discussed. Mr Ingram, who as a former vice-president of Oxford University Students Union was instrumental in appointing a women's officer and securing a night bus scheme for women students, said: "I think the committee will suffer as a result of this narrow agenda. I told them I thought it was a committee to discuss women's issues and not a committee for women."



No welcome: Steve Goddard and Paul Ingram



James Aukett leaving the hearing, at which he denied sexually harassing an assistant

Dentist 'used spanking to help exam revision'

BY TIM JONES

A DENTIST put an assistant across his knees and slapped her bottom as he made her shout answers in an exam revision test, a disciplinary hearing was told yesterday.

James Aukett, 49, was alleged to have carried out the assault at his clinic in Brighton in 1991, when the assistant was 19. The disciplinary committee of the General Dental Council was told that Mr Aukett had insisted that the young woman go to his office although she had German measles.

Jane Sullivan, for the council, said: "Mr Aukett took hold of her, pulled down her girths and knickers, put her across his knees and slapped her bottom, making her shout out answers to questions."

She said the dentist had told the woman, who was identified only as Miss A, that she would have to take off an item of clothing for every set of three questions she got wrong in a written questionnaire.

At first, Miss Sullivan said, the assistant had laughed it off as a joke but Mr Aukett, formerly director of dental services for South Downs NHS Trust, had grabbed her as he sat at his tutor's desk.

Miss A, who is now pregnant with her second child, said that after the spanking she had felt "totally humiliated and embarrassed". She said that Mr Aukett watched her dress, gave her a peck on

the cheek and told her there were no hard feelings.

After escaping from the room, Miss Sullivan said, the woman told another dentist, a dental nurse and her mother what had happened and only her mother had told her to complain.

Miss A joined Mr Aukett's practice when she was 16. She said: "He was very friendly at first but there was always sexual innuendo. After the incident I drove away in tears. He was a person in authority. I thought everybody was going to believe him and not me."

Later, she said, Mr Aukett told her he was sorry and that he could lose his job for what he had done.

Questioned by Nicola Davies, QC, for Mr Aukett, Miss A said she could not recall taking the pop singer Madonna's "raunchy" book about sex to show to other dental trainees.

The committee was told that other members of staff were victims of Mr Aukett's sexual innuendo. This included suggestions, it was alleged, that nurses' uniforms should be changed to see-through blouses and stockings.

Mr Aukett is also accused of deliberately making a false declaration on an application form by his wife, Frances, 48, for an examination in 1998. She is now a senior education officer with the NHS trust. The hearing continues.

Council must find home for Swede

BY FRANCES GIBB, LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

A HOMELESS Swedish single mother won a High Court battle yesterday against a council's refusal to house her and her children.

In a test ruling, the court held that the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham had acted unlawfully when it gave Amma Damoah, 39, an ultimatum to go home at public expense or receive no further help if she refused. Mr Justice Kay declared that Ms Damoah, who had fled domestic violence in Sweden, was entitled to rely on the provisions of the Children Act 1989 to safeguard her family while she looked for work in Britain.

Legal experts said that the ruling would benefit other people seeking jobs in the European Union. There were warn-

ings that it could lead to a rise in "benefits tourism". People from the Continent with dependent children would be able to use the Children Act to get around statutory regulations barring them from claiming income support and housing help, according to some legal experts.

The judge said that the council's decision had amounted to unlawfully "washing its hands of the children". It had been entitled to offer to return the family to the country from where they came if it believed that would best meet the needs of the child. But, he added: "It is wrong for the local authority to decide to withdraw all further assistance for the child in the event that the parent declines to accept the offer."

Silcott fails to overturn murder conviction

BY RICHARD FORD, HOME CORRESPONDENT

WINSTON SILCOTT yesterday lost his attempt to have a second murder conviction re-examined by the Court of Appeal.

Silcott, cleared on appeal of the murder of Police Constable Keith Blakelock, had hoped to win his freedom from jail, where he is serving a life sentence. He was convicted in 1986 at the Old Bailey of the murder of Anthony Smith, a boxer, who died after a fight at a party in East London.

Last night the Criminal Cases Review Commission, which investigates alleged miscarriages of justice, said it had decided against sending the case back to the appeal court. Silcott has always said that he was acting in self-defence



Silcott is serving life for killing boxer

North London. He was convicted of the murder of PC Blakelock but the conviction was quashed on appeal in 1991 amid fears that vital evidence could have been fabricated.

Silcott has received about £17,000 compensation for that miscarriage of justice.

His solicitor submitted new statements from witnesses backing Silcott's claim that Smith was armed with a knife and appeared to threaten Silcott at the party.

The evidence added that Smith was the leader of a criminal gang bringing terror to North London. He had allegedly picked a fight with one of Silcott's friends days before his death. When Silcott intervened, Smith had allegedly threatened to kill him, leading Silcott to arm himself on the night of the party.

If it feels good, it's good for you

BY NIGEL HAWKES, SCIENCE EDITOR

ENJOYING pleasurable sensations, and even simply thinking about them, gives the immune system a boost, scientists have found.

Volunteers who sniffed the aroma of melted chocolate showed a temporary increase in their ability to fend off common infections such as colds. But those who sniffed rotting meat showed a decline. The positive effect of the chocolate was much greater in men.

In another experiment, the act of writing down an account of something that had given pleasure produced a similar boost, while writing about feelings of guilt produced the reverse.

The results, announced yesterday, are the first from a programme of research commis-

sioned by Arise, a coalition of scientists backed by the food, drink and tobacco industries. They believe that the positive role of pleasure has been neglected in medical research.

Professor David Warburton, of the University of Reading, asked 40 volunteers to spend five minutes writing about an experience that had caused happiness or guilt.

He said: "Whatever your pleasure is, try to maximise it. At the end of the day, you should review how good the day has been, picking out the high spots. This will strengthen your immune system and protect against infections."

Indulging in the same pleasure all the time will not work, however, because the response to it will become blunted.

Hague's aunt bluffs way on TV

WILLIAM HAGUE'S aunt dipped yesterday to her lottery winnings yesterday to pay for a guest spot on the television programme *Call My Bluff*.

Marjorie Longdin, 73, paid £12,000 for the privilege of appearing on the television show as part of an auction organised by Radio 2 for BBC Children in Need. She scooped an £86,648 National Lottery prize after matching six numbers in the midweek National Lottery draw a week ago and shared the £3.4 million jackpot with three other punters.

Mrs Longdin, from Tickhill, near Doncaster, put in her winning bid during Terry Wogan's *Breakfast Show* yesterday. The presenter has been offering one-in-a-lifetime packages to listeners who ring in with the highest bids.

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IN THE SATURDAY TIMES



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Cuddly in cashmere



JONATHAN MEADES
Why British food revival is a con

Big rise in Britons imprisoned abroad

ABOUT 2,350 Britons are being held in foreign prisons, an increase of more than 400 in a year. Half have been charged or convicted over drugs.

The rise is revealed in the latest Foreign Office consular report on dealing with the problems of the record numbers of Britons travelling overseas. More than 1,800 died abroad last year, including 43 murder victims.

The largest number of British prisoners is in Spain, with 348, followed by France (324), the United States (281) and Germany (122). Together these four countries account for almost half of the total. In each case, the numbers in jail have increased.

Officials working in British consulates were notified of the arrests of a total of 8,822 Britons last year, and made 8,797 prison visits. Thirty-four Britons were transferred back to the United Kingdom to complete their sentences under international prisoner exchange agreements and those negotiated bilaterally with Brazil, Egypt and Thailand.

The report underlines the increasing workload of consular officials at a time when the Foreign Office budget is facing sharp cuts. In 1996, there were

Most are held in Spain and France, and half the offences have involved drugs, reports Michael Binyon

more than 42 million visits abroad by Britons; last year this rose to a record 46.8 million, an increase of nearly 40 per cent in five years. France and Spain remain the most popular holiday destinations. An estimated 14 million Britons live abroad, the largest

numbers being in Hong Kong (3.6 million, including overseas passport holders), Australia (3.4 million), Canada (3 million), South Africa (1.8 million), USA (0.9 million) and Spain (0.4 million). British posts abroad last year issued or amended 399,000 passports, a 13 per cent increase on 1996 and more passports issued abroad than any other country. Consular officials were notified of 1,827 Britons who died abroad. The largest number by far was in Spain (405), and after natural causes road accidents accounted for the bulk of deaths. There were also 43 murders, 43 suspected suicides, 41 drownings and 30 who died in other accidents at sea.

Figures for cases of violence against Britons reported to consular officials included 161 assaults, 121 robberies, 66 rapes, 17 abductions and eight terrorist actions. British consular officials dealt with 12 kidnappings and hostage-taking cases, most of which were resolved. Consular officials also arranged warnings to or the evacuation of Britons in Indonesia, Lesotho and Eritrea.

The report underlined the often thankless task of consular work, which involved 9,248 cases last year, and received 86 complaints. The total cost to the taxpayer was £43.7million. Five new honorary consuls were appointed in Montpellier, Varna, Vladivostok, St Kins and Szczecin, bringing the total to 240 honorary consulates in 90 countries.



Diane Cramwill take her place on the Bench with her guide dog, Prudence

AROUND THE WORLD WITHOUT A CLUE

For the first time, the report gives details of cases resolved by consular officials. One tells of a 90-year-old Briton who arrived in Tokyo on a round-the-world backpacking trip with no money or travel insurance. He had brought only his Post Office account cash card. "The vice-consul discovered that the cash card could be used to draw money through one of the handful of international bank machines in Tokyo and escorted him through the crowded rush-hour streets," the report said. "He told the vice-consul he was surprised the Post Office did not have a branch in Tokyo!"

Another case related to the discovery by archaeologists during construction work in Turkmenistan of a body whose clothing indicated a British cavalryman from the early part of the century. British soldiers were there in 1919 fighting against Bolsheviks. The body was buried in a Christian cemetery in a service attended by the Ambassador.

Woman wins her fight to be first blind JP

By SIMON DE BRUXELLES

A WOMAN who helped to overturn a 52-year-old ruling to become Britain's first blind magistrate takes her place on the Bench today.

The appointment of Diane Cram, 43, from Exeter, is the culmination of a four-year campaign to prove that blind people are as capable of administering justice as the sighted. Until now, Lord Chancellors have stood behind a 1946 ruling that excluded blind magistrates on the ground that they were unable to observe a defendant's demeanour.

Mrs Cram, who is chairman of her local branch of Guide Dogs for the Blind, wrote to the Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine of Lairg, asking him to reconsider the regulations earlier this year after her application to the Bench was turned down. His staff replied that a review was underway.

They invited her to become one of six visually handicapped candidates training as JPs as part of an 18-month experiment. The five others, who are partially sighted, are to sit for the first time in the next few weeks.

Mrs Cram, who lost her sight after a routine dental operation 15 years ago, said: "I was absolutely delighted. Lord Irvine has shown he is not afraid to challenge the legal establishment."

"I cannot see what a defendant's expression has got to do with anything. We are supposed to judge on the evidence, not on the way someone looks."

As a newcomer, she will sit as a "winger" to the chairman of the Bench at Exeter and Womford Magistrates' Court, hearing cases such as burglary, common assault, criminal damage and driving offences.

Mrs Cram, a mother of three who recently separated from her husband, has defied her disability by pursuing hobbies such as line dancing and horse-riding. But her proudest moment will be when she enters court with her nine-year-old German shepherd guide dog, Prudence.

She has already practised her entrance with the sighted magistrates and said: "We want to keep things dignified. We need to bow together and I will get a tap on the hand from one of my colleagues when the time comes."

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Trendy platform for Trainspotting star

Joanna Bale reports on fortunes tale of two actors both being paid the Equity theatre minimum

EWAN MCGREGOR may regard his £250-a-week wages at the Hampstead Theatre as beer money, but to his co-star, Sean Gilder, it is cash to keep the wolf from the door.

Last night, at the opening performance of David Halliwell's 1965 comedy *Little Malcolm and his Struggle against the Eunuchs*, the two actors, who are on the same pay, wowed a packed audience at the 174-seat theatre in North London.

But while McGregor takes a huge salary cut and puts his Hollywood career on hold to return to his thespian roots, Gilder is thankful that he no longer has to work as a barman and hospital porter to pay his bills.

Gilder, 34, who lives in a modest rented flat near McGregor's £1.25 million townhouse in North London, said yesterday: "I am just a jobbing

actor who, until quite recently, has had some really hard times. I had two nine-month periods where I had nothing offered to me and was forced to work as a barman and a hospital porter."

With a lead role in the ITV series *Hornblower*, Gilder's career is now flourishing, but he never takes the work for granted. "You never know when it all might dry up, so £250 — which is £200 after tax — is not to be sniffed at. Thankfully television work is more lucrative, so it means I can afford to do theatre without having to supplement my income with jobs like barwork."

McGregor is following in the footsteps of stars such as Nicole Kidman, Kevin Spacey and Juliette Binoche, who have been happy to receive the Equity minimum wage for a chance to play the London stage. Despite McGregor's



Nicole Kidman: from Hollywood to London

Hollywood heart-throb status, Gilder warmed to the *Trainspotting* star's professional attitude in rehearsals.

"He's a lovely down-to-earth bloke with a great enthusiasm for the play," Gilder said. "He is totally unaffected by all the Hollywood hype. He turns up to the theatre on his motorbike for rehearsals and we just have a hoo."

He and McGregor became good friends after travelling with two other cast members to Huddersfield, where the

play is set, just to see the town. He added: "The director thought it would be a good idea, and it was. We stayed the night there and ever since then we have stuck together as a group. I hope it comes across in the play."

The production which runs to January 2, is, predictably, a sell-out, with tickets rumoured to be changing hands on the black market for hundreds of pounds. However, the distinct possibility of a move to the West End may bring it to a wider audience.

McGregor plays Malcolm Scrawdyke, a 1960s art school student who plots revenge for being suspended. The production is very much a family affair. McGregor's uncle, Denis Lawson, directs and Lou Gish, daughter of Lawson's partner Sheila Gish, also stars.

McGregor recently said: "If people come along to Hampstead thinking, 'That's the guy from *Trainspotting*, we're going to show them a great play. Maybe then some day they'll go: 'Oh, I quite liked that, I'll maybe go to the theatre again.' That's what's fantastic."



Ewan McGregor, left, and Sean Gilder preparing yesterday for the first night at the Hampstead Theatre

EWAN MCGREGOR, aged 28

Job description: heart-throb filmstar
Credits: *Shallow Grave*, *Trainspotting*, *A Life Less Ordinary* and soon-to-be-released Hollywood prequel to *Star Wars*.
Estimated wealth: films have so far earned him £4 million
Family: married to Eve, French set designer, daughter Ciara, 2
Home: £1.25 million house in Belzite Park, north London
Education: left school at 16. Studied acting at Guildhall School of Speech and Drama, London
Big break: Dennis Potter's 1993 television series *Lipstick On My Collar* in his final year at drama college
Resting jobs: don't be ridiculous
Most treasured possession: Ducati 748 motorcycle
Favourite hobbies: motorbiking and football

SEAN GILDER, aged 34

Job description: jobbing actor
Credits: productions with English Shakespeare Company, bit parts in *The Bill*, *Casualty*, lead part in ITV's *Hornblower*.
Estimated wealth: £30,000 a year
Family: lives with stage-manager girlfriend, no children. No relatives in the business
Home: rented flat in Muswell Hill, north London
Education: degree in modern history from London University
Studied acting at Webber Douglas, London
Big Break: *Our Boys* at the Donmar in 1993
Resting jobs: barman, hospital porter
Most treasured possession: his new word-processor
Favourite hobbies: Golf and script-writing

School website links pupils to drug advice

By Victoria Fletcher

A DRUGS education website launched yesterday by the Government links directly to another site which tells young people how to enjoy their first LSD "trip".

The official website, set up by the Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence and partly funded by the Department for Education and Employment, does not endorse other drugs information sites but does offer pupils and teachers direct links to what they consider to be the "most informative" other drugs sites.

One of these hyperlinks takes visitors to Cascade, where pupils can send questions about drugs to the new Mandy and Claire Problem Page. Recommendations by "Mandy and Claire" include how to get the most enjoyment out of your first LSD trip and the "relaxed happiness and uncontrollable laughter" that results after smoking marijuana.

The computer-based advice follows new guidelines for schools calling for leniency in the treatment of pupils caught with drugs, which caused an outcry from some teachers' leaders earlier this week.

Charles Clarke, Minister for Schools, launched the official site which offers the latest research into drugs, names of regional drug action teams and recommended drug prevention policy.

At the Forest Gate Community School in Newham, East London, Mr Clarke said: "Drugs are a threat to ever younger children. We believe pupils and young people must be made aware of the risks of drug abuse before they are likely to be drawn into experimentation."

He added: "This is an excellent way of using technology to equip teachers with vital information about the latest materials and current policies on drug education. It will provide invaluable support to teachers in their crucial role of educating pupils about the dangers of drugs."

Doug McAvoy, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said that details of the effects of drugs should not be put in too light a context. "Although the NUT agrees with the growing use of computers in school, it must be very careful of what it is linked to."

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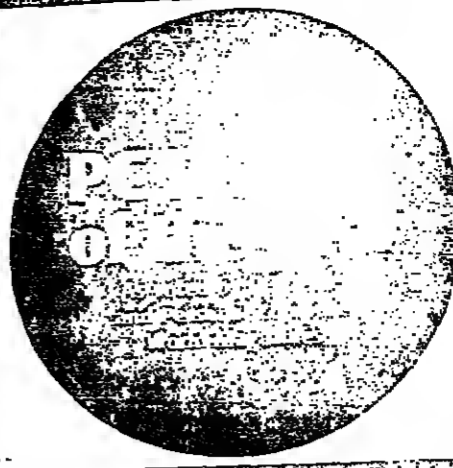
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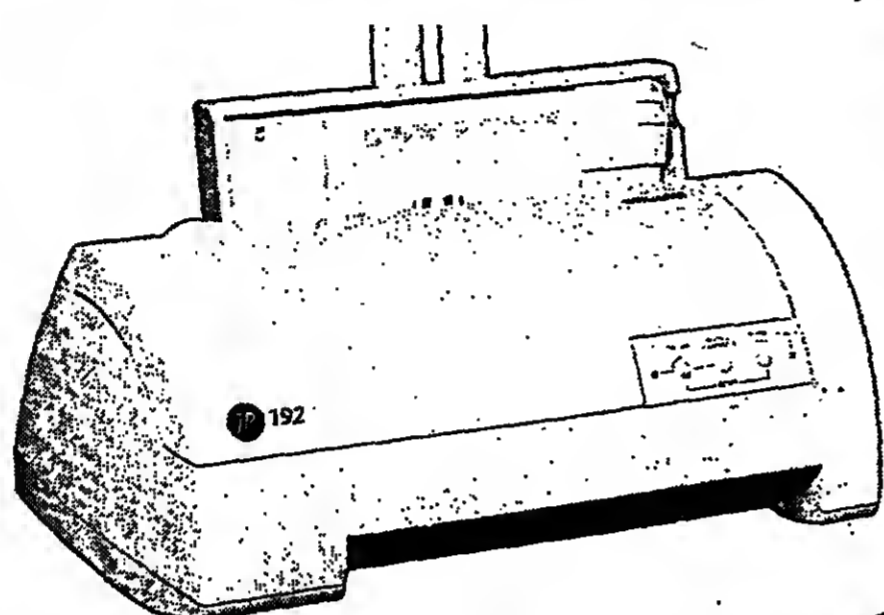
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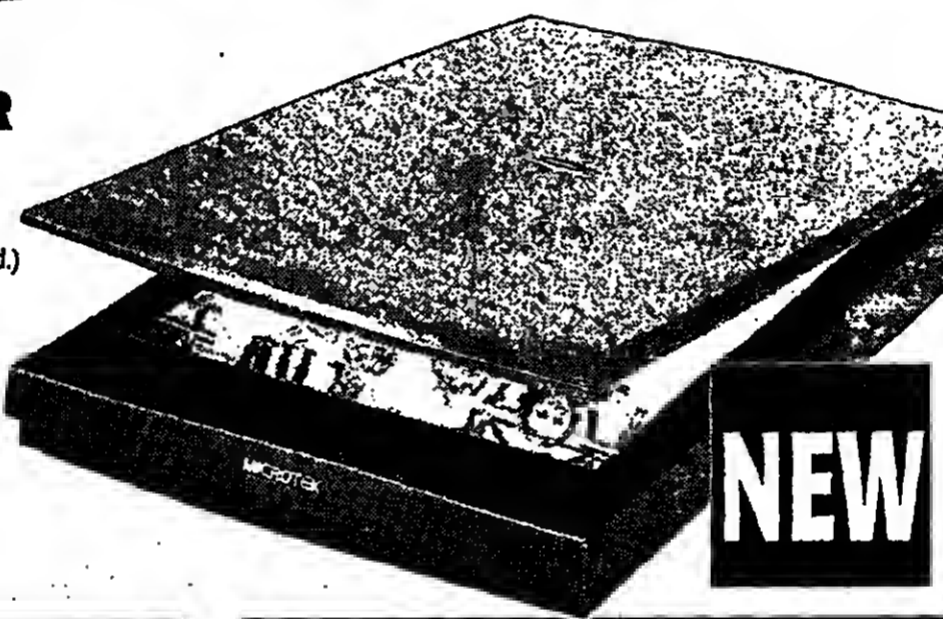
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Prince takes

Patten denies decision to disband RUC

BY MARTIN FLETCHER, CHIEF IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

CHRIS PATTEN yesterday denounced as a "piece of fiction" a highly inflammatory report that suggested his policing commission was considering the effective disbandment of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

The former Conservative minister and Governor of Hong Kong said *The Irish Times* had published the report despite being told it was a fabrication. "We have not started forming conclusions," he said. His commission had just launched a Province-wide consultation exercise and "we are not going round holding 30-odd meetings in the next few weeks as a sort of pre-Christmas pantomime".

Mo Mowlam, the Northern Ireland Secretary, was equally adamant that no drafts existed. She called the front-page article "very unhelpful", but

Jim Cusack, *Irish Times* security correspondent, said he and his newspaper stood by it.

The report said the commission's preliminary drafts recommend that RUC officers be invited to apply to join a newly constituted force — the Northern Ireland Police Service — which would have more Roman Catholic officers and be more accountable to local authorities. The Union Jack and the Queen's portrait would be removed from police stations.

The vehemence of Mr Patten's and the Government's denials demonstrated the extreme sensitivity of the policing issue. Sinn Féin is demanding that the RUC be disbanded, but Unionists are equally determined that the force should not be sacrificed.

Mr Patten held a hastily arranged meeting with David Trimble, Northern Ireland's

First Minister, yesterday. Mr Trimble left after 30 minutes saying he had been assured no drafts existed, but added: "We remain concerned because speculation does not appear out of nowhere."

Ken Maginnis, the Ulster Unionist Party's security spokesman, said the commission would have to be disbanded if the report was true. "It would be completely unacceptable that conclusions had been reached at a time when the commission is just embarking on a further phase of an extended consultation process." Any proposal to disband the RUC would represent "another capitulation to terrorism".

The commission was established as part of the Good Friday peace accord. It has received written submissions from interested parties, and is due to report next summer.



Royal mail: the Queen meeting motorcycle couriers outside the Merrill Lynch offices in the City yesterday

City bankers welcome the Queen

THE Queen paced a busy trading floor and met City brokers yesterday as part of a new drive to bring her closer to British working life (Susie Steiner writes).

The day of engagements, themed on London's money markets, took in six financial institutions and was the start of a more targeted approach to the royal schedule by Buckingham Palace. The Lord Mayor of London, who would normally

greet the Queen in morning coat and tails at the Mansion House, instead wore a business suit and met her at the American investment bank where he works.

"The Palace told me, 'This is not a ceremonial visit. It's about people with their sleeves rolled up,'" said Lord Levene of Portsoken, who took over as the new Lord Mayor last week. The Queen and

the Duke began their tour at Canary Wharf, and then greeted the Lord Mayor at the Bankers Trust. The Duke, meanwhile, visited Lloyds TSB bank and regulators of the Stock Exchange.

On her way out of the building she stopped to chat with motorcycle couriers. "She wanted to know how long I'd been doing the job and if I liked it," said Stephen McMarlow, one of the riders.

Diana car may have been stuck in neutral

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

THE car in which Diana, Princess of Wales was killed was probably freewheeling in neutral at high speed when it crashed into a pillar in a Paris underpass, a new report says.

Forensic tests indicate that Henri Paul, who died in the crash, made a critical error as he struggled to control the powerful Mercedes. Tests by an expert, Michel Nibodeau, submitted to the crash investigator, Hervé Stéphan, show that M Paul apparently tried to slow the car by putting it into a lower gear just before the crash. He may instead have slipped the car's automatic gearbox into neutral, thus losing control.

Witnesses reported hearing a roaring from the engine. "As far as the racing of the engine is concerned, we believe this was due to a mistaken movement of the gear stick towards the neutral position through ignorance of the gear system," M Nibodeau reported. "We note that the chauffeur was not qualified to drive the car."

Prince takes issue with homeless

BY ADAM FRESCO

THE Prince of Wales jokingly swore at a group of homeless people yesterday as he unveiled a plaque commemorating new buildings for *The Big Issue* magazine.

He told the them that he had a sore throat and hoped everyone could hear him when a vendor of the magazine shouted: "Chaz, do you want a Tune then?"

There were several more light-hearted cries for him to unveil the plaque, to which he laughingly replied: "Why don't you lot come and open this bloody thing." During his speech, the Prince said: "It is a great pleasure to meet the highly intelligent and vociferous people that seem to inhabit this place."

As he left the new £2 million headquarters in Central London, where he dipped into his pocket and bought the latest issue of the magazine, John Castleman, 38, who has



The Prince takes a look at *The Big Issue* yesterday

been selling *The Big Issue* on the streets for three months, repeatedly asked him to sign a copy. Despite the protestations of royal bodyguards, Mr Castleman continued after the Prince saying: "Come on, Chaz, sign this one." Finally the Prince gave in and as he turned to sign his name sighed: "Oh, you Hackney characters." During his tour of the offices, the Prince asked

after his former schoolfriend Clive Harold, whom he met last December when he toured their old offices in Clerkenwell.

Mr Harold, an alcoholic, was at the time selling *The Big Issue* outside Holborn station and told the Prince that they were at Hill House prep school together in Chelsea in the late Fifties. But he was out at the visit yesterday as the

former journalist had "a number of social problems to sort out", according to staff.

The Prince was also read poetry by vendors of the magazine, including one from a Colombian woman whose brother is named after the Prince and sister after the Queen.

Among those he met was "D" Fisher, 28, who told him how she and nearly a hundred friends had formed a limited company to purchase a street of Victorian terraced houses in London Fields, Hackney, from the council so that they could live in them.

As he officially opened the building, which was bought with the proceeds from the sale of the previous headquarters, and was refurbished with the help of several companies, the Prince said: "It's been marvellous to see what good corporate citizenship can do. I just want to express my heartfelt congratulations and appreciation for all the hard work that has gone on."

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NHS may face £1bn bill for 48-hour week

Junior doctors and lorry drivers will feel effects of EU curb, write Charles Bremner and Mark Henderson

HIGHER prices in the shops and extra costs of more than £1 billion for the NHS were forecast yesterday as the European Commission announced plans to widen restrictions on working hours.

The British Medical Association said that an extra 6,000 junior doctors, costing more than £1.1 billion to train, would be needed to maintain levels of patient care if the proposal to phase in a 48-hour week for house officers and registrars were approved by EU ministers next month. The new staff would add more than £100 million to the NHS salary bill.

The Commission's move to extend the Working Time Directive, adopted by Britain last month, could also lead to price rises for consumers as nearly six million transport workers are brought within its scope. The Road Haulage Association warned of price rises of up to a third for goods such as newspapers, whose delivery time is sensitive. The Newspaper Publishers Association declined to comment.

Britain cannot veto the proposals, which are likely to be adopted by qualified majority. At present, several groups who work a flexible timetable are excluded from the directive. Junior doctors and trans-

port workers will no longer be excluded, although doctors will be allowed to work up to 54 hours for a further seven years under a compromise demanded by Britain. Time spent resting but on call will not be counted. Both groups will be allowed to work overtime in individual weeks, but must average below the legal maximum over a four-month period, and hours must never exceed 60 in any one week.

Health-service groups said that the proposals would have serious consequences for the NHS, which still requires one in six junior doctors to work more than the 56 hours a week set by their recent New Deal. Stephen Thornton, chief executive of the NHS Confederation, said that swift implementation would hit care standards: "We won't have enough doctors to go round and patient care will be affected."

Junior doctors welcomed the principles behind the move, but also warned of difficulties.



Kimnock said safety was more important than cost

Andrew Hobart, chairman of the BMA junior doctors committee, said: "It has to be introduced sensibly and with some necessary flexibilities."

Lorry drivers were also concerned. Dan Hodges, of the Road Haulage Association, said: "Good employers will remain good employers and bad employers will flout the new regulations. Those on the margins will be forced to the wall." He said the extension of the directive had been forced by militant trade unions on the Continent.

Neil Kinnock, the Transport Commissioner, said that safety concerns could not be ignored for reasons of cost: "I don't think there's a tolerance level for junior doctors or truck drivers which means that, at the margin, there is a willingness to accept the risk of tragedy that comes with fatigue." Fatigue was estimated to cause 20 per cent of the 8,100 deaths per year in accidents involving coaches and lorries on the EU's roads, he said.

Padraig Flynn, the Social Affairs Commissioner, said there was enough support among EU states to ensure that the rules would become law by the end of next year.

The NHS is already trying to recruit 1,000 extra trainee doctors a year in a seven-year plan. Britain and Ireland are alone in their tradition of requiring trainee doctors to work extremely long hours, and had won an exemption when the original working-time law was passed.

UPPER LIMIT WILL EXCLUDE MANY

Several occupations will still be excluded from the full terms of the Working Time Directive, even if yesterday's proposal is adopted. Most qualify to work extra time because their jobs involve copious travel or irregular hours, or because they decide the length of their own working days. The groups are the self-employed, managers and executives, journalists, vicars and family workers, air crews and offshore platform workers. Essential civil and military defence personnel — policemen, firemen and the Armed Forces — are also exempt. Individuals in other jobs can work longer than the maximum, but only if their employer has obtained their agreement in writing.

Kimnock said safety was more important than cost

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Susan Marshall outside the High Court: she was offered the job as Simon Stone

Sex-change prosecutor settles her legal battle

By Frances Gibb
LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

A CROWN prosecutor who claimed that she lost her job when she decided to have a sex change settled her legal battle with Dame Barbara Mills, the former Director of Public Prosecutions, yesterday.

Susan Marshall, 52, a barrister at Oxford University and former Naval commander, had said that she was offered the job when she was still Simon Stone.

The offer was withdrawn, however, after she wrote to Dame Barbara, who retired from the post of DPP at the end of last month, explaining that she was undergoing sex-change treatment.

The Crown Prosecution Service had planned to fight an Employment Appeals Tribunal ruling in the Court of Appeal yesterday that work equality extends to transsexuals and she could pursue her claim for sex discrimination.

But before the hearing began before Lords Justices Roch, Chadwick and May, the two sides reached agreement "amicably on confidential terms".

Lawyers involved in the case said the CPS and Dame Barbara had withdrawn their application for leave to appeal and Ms Marshall had in turn withdrawn her claim for sex discrimination, which had been supported by the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Ms Marshall had her operation in 1994.

Britain challenged on barristers' immunity

Frances Gibb reports on human rights claim over 'negligence'

THE Government is being challenged to justify the immunity that prevents people from suing barristers for negligence.

The case, before the European Commission of Human Rights, is being brought by a former bank accountant who was convicted of pre-judging a drug-trafficking investigation.

Mohammed Yusuf Patel was convicted in December 1987 and sentenced to four years' imprisonment. He served almost 2½ years. His appeal against conviction failed but he now has a further appeal pending before the Court of Appeal.

He claims his conviction was a miscarriage of justice that was as much the fault of the trial barrister as the failings of the criminal justice system. But attempts to sue his former barrister, claiming damages for losses caused by the alleged negligence, have failed. As a result of a House

of Lords ruling in 1969 in a case called *Rondel v Worsely*, which confirmed barristers' immunity from negligence suits, most of his claim was struck out.

The Court of Appeal upheld that decision and Mr Patel went to the House of Lords, which also rejected his petition to review advocates' immunity over in-court work.

Daniel Machover, solicitor for Mr Patel, said: "He believes the immunity is an unjust procedural bar, supported by some highly dubious and outdated 'public policy' rea-

sons." The Government now have to set out its reasons in a written response to the European Commission of Human Rights, he added.

It is asking whether the immunity can be justified in the light of the right to a fair trial under article six of the European Convention of Human Rights. Mr Machover added that there were a number of similar cases pending before the Court of Appeal, all challenging barristers' immunity from suit.

"If the Government lose this case it will have to change the law to make it possible for barristers and solicitor advocates to be sued in negligence for work done in court."

Although a new European Court of Human Rights has now set up in place of the old Commission and Court, cases already lodged before the beginning of this month will be dealt with under the old system.

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Y NOVEMBER 19 1998

Sex-change prosecutor settles her legal battle

By Francis Gibb
LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

A CROWN prosecutor who claimed that she lost her job when she decided to have a sex change settled her legal battle with Dame Barbara Williams, the former Director of Public Prosecutions, yesterday.

Suzanne Marshall, 52, a lecturer at Oxford University and a former naval commander, had said that she was offered the job when she was still a man.

The offer was withdrawn, however, after she wrote to Dame Barbara, who was in the post of DPP at the end of last month, explaining that she was undergoing sex change treatment.

The Crown Prosecution Service had planned to file an Employment Appeal Tribunal ruling in the Court of Appeal yesterday that would extend to transsexuals the equal pay provisions which would permit them to claim for sex discrimination.

But before the hearing began, Lord Justice Bingham, Lord Justice Balcanquhall and Lord Justice Phillips reached agreement, apparently on condition that the DPP would not proceed with the case.

Ms Marshall, who is a lecturer in the Department of Law at the University of Oxford, had written to Dame Barbara in 1996, asking her to withdraw the case.

Challenged on immunity

Gibb

The Crown Prosecution Service has been challenged on its immunity from legal action by a former prosecutor who claims she was unfairly treated after a sex change operation. The case, which is being heard in the Court of Appeal, is the first time a transsexual has brought a claim against the DPP. The claimant, Suzanne Marshall, a lecturer at Oxford University, had written to Dame Barbara Williams, the former Director of Public Prosecutions, in 1996, asking her to withdraw the case. The offer was withdrawn, however, after she wrote to Dame Barbara, who was in the post of DPP at the end of last month, explaining that she was undergoing sex change treatment. The Crown Prosecution Service had planned to file an Employment Appeal Tribunal ruling in the Court of Appeal yesterday that would extend to transsexuals the equal pay provisions which would permit them to claim for sex discrimination. But before the hearing began, Lord Justice Bingham, Lord Justice Balcanquhall and Lord Justice Phillips reached agreement, apparently on condition that the DPP would not proceed with the case.

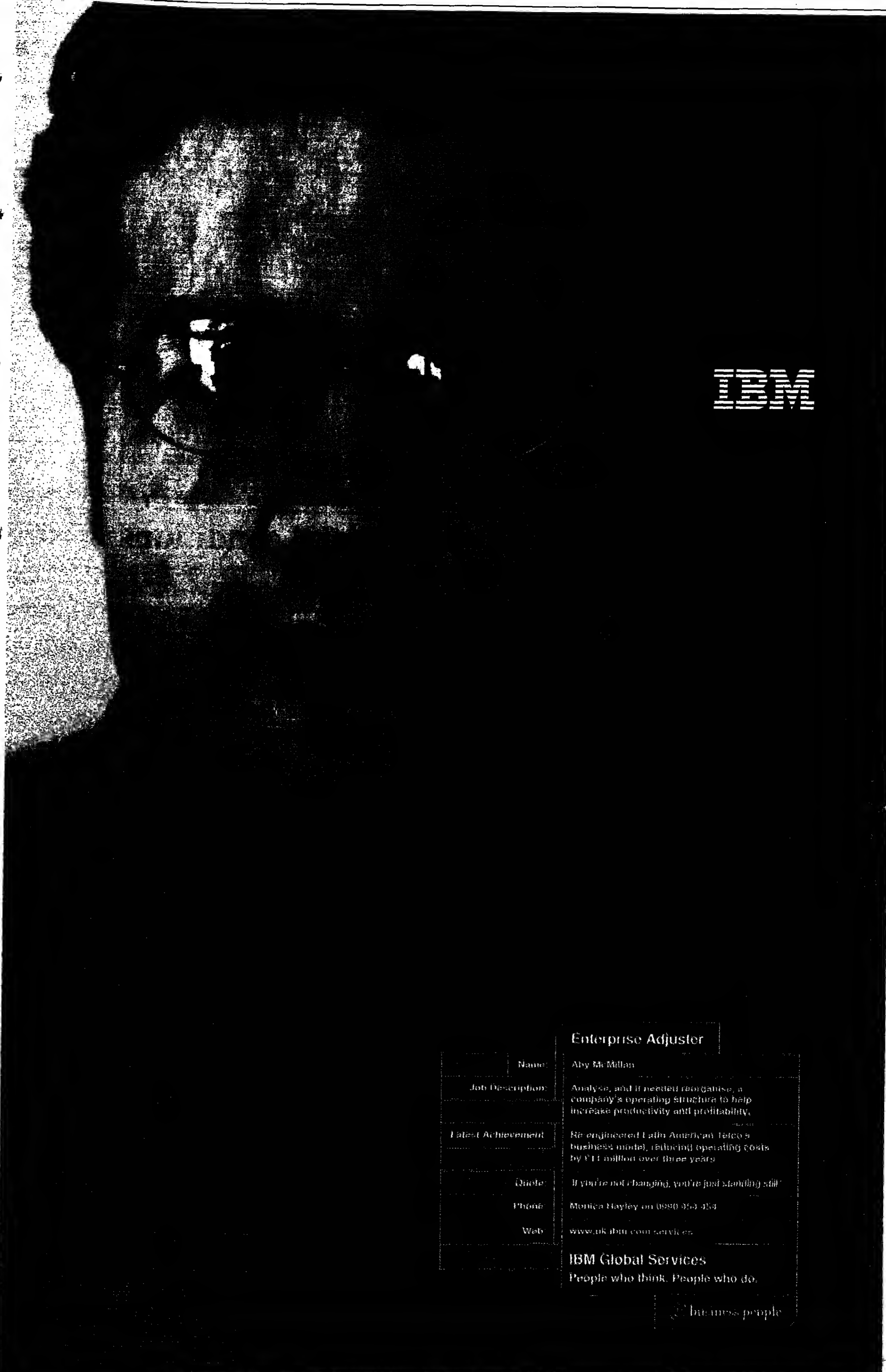
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No cut-off for failing to pay water bill

Firms say ban means extra cost for everyone, reports Nick Nuttall

DISCONNECTIONS are to be outlawed under plans to reform the water industry. Water companies reacted angrily to the news and claimed that compensating for bad debts would force up the bills of other customers.

Michael Meacher, the Environment Minister, said that the Government was "not pursued" by their worries, as the companies had a battery of options to crack down on determined non-payers without the need to disconnect. These include taking people to court, using bailiffs to recover money or goods, the use of attachment of earnings orders and other civil debt procedures.

The new rules will cover households, schools and hospitals. Water firms carried out 1,900 disconnections last year. Mr Meacher said that the right threatened the health of some households in genuine financial difficulty. It was better that the courts, rather than water companies, decided which homes were in financial distress and which ones were trying to fiddle the system.

"We believe that water is essential for life and health, and that no one should be deprived of it simply because of an inability to pay," he said. "Our proposals will mean an end to domestic disconnections and ensure that no school or hospital is ever disconnected for non-payment of water bills."

The Government was also keen to see meters offered free to all homes to reduce water demand to protect rivers, wetlands and other sensitive areas during times of drought. About 13 per cent of households pay for water by meter, with the heaviest concentrations in drier parts of the country such as East Anglia.

All homes built since 1990, when the old rates system was

scrapped, have had meters installed. The rest pay for water in the traditional unmeasured way based on the old rateable value of a home. The Government believes that metering, which is commonplace on the Continent, makes homeowners more careful in using water.

Mr Meacher said some water companies offered meters free to users but others did not. This was slowing their uptake, especially among poorer households, who could not afford the cost of £75 to £150.

Officials at the Department of the Environment said that free meters could be in a third of homes in five years. The cost would be spread among all water consumers, adding an average of £1 to all water customers' bills over a year. But the officials said this was unlikely to be needed given the pressure for water bills in England and Wales to be cut by 10 per cent between 2000 and 2005 after rising by over a third on average since privatisation in 1989.

Mr Meacher said it was not just single people or ones in big houses with high rateable values that would benefit from metering. "A half of all households on income support will gain from the use of a metered supply," he said.

Metering, which the government supports as mandatory for big domestic water users such as those with swimming pools, also pave the way for flexible tariffs.

The British Medical Association welcomed the plan to outlaw disconnections. But Pamela Taylor, chief executive of Water UK, which represents the industry, said the proposals would "leave us with a patchy system of using rates and meters with no real sense of where we're going."



Paul Gover, station delivery manager for the Jubilee Line, with some of the vandalised cables at the London Bridge station on the Jubilee Line

Best rates and the worst conditions

Michael Horsnell on the militant Jubilee Line workers who 'do like their tea breaks'

THEY earn the best rates in the construction industry, often topping £1,000 a week. But the 500 electricians working on the Jubilee Line extension give the impression of regarding conditions as little better than those on the Burma Railway. Below ground, rats are their companions; management is the real enemy.

The electricians working on the vital transport link to the Millennium Dome are earning a reputation as the most militant workers since the industrial anarchy of the Seventies.

They have staged unofficial walk-outs over the moving of 12 of their number from one site to another and over alleged safety deficiencies in their working environment — a claim hotly denied by London Underground. Certainly conditions are tough but their

pay — a top rate of £1,150 for a 65-hour week if deadlines are beaten — is the envy of other electricians.

According to management, most earn "the best part of £1,000 a week" which is rather better than the standard industry rate of £7.50 an hour.

One insider said they worked long hours but "they do like their tea breaks". Another said workers' concerns over safety were overstated: "One of their wildcat strikes was over the fire alarm — it's cobbler's."

Subject to random breathalyser tests before they are allowed "down the hole", the electricians frequently find

themselves working on their knees in cramped conditions.

Air quality, noise and lighting are other tribulations. With building supplies being moved between sites by diesel train, the air can be less than wholesome and high-powered fans have to be used to comply with health and safety regulations.

Ear muffs are a common sight below ground because of the reverberating noise from power drills and the fans themselves. To overcome the poor overhead lighting, the men usually drag spotlights behind them. After a 7.30am start, the first break of the day

is taken at 10am when, according to one electrician, workers dare not leave their post a moment too late or they spend the entire 15 minutes queuing for tea.

Rigorous work inspections by Drake & Scull, the contractors, who monitor the progress of each man, and London Transport representatives are another part of the drudgery. No one denies the work is well rewarded but, equally, few feel they have over-reacted to the working conditions.

Some are concerned enough about their militant image that they have signed a petition to John Reid, the Transport Minister, and Andrew Smith, the Employment Minister, seeking assurances that they will not be blacklisted from future work once the project is completed.

NEWS IN BRIEF

5m cars 'at risk from lead ban'

More than five million cars in Britain could be at risk from engine damage after the European ban on leaded petrol takes effect on January 1, 2000. Peter Barlow, of the Retail Motor Industry Federation, told a seminar that tests in Sweden indicated that unleaded petrol was not as effective in stopping engine wear and that additives did not perform as well. When the ban comes into force many small-engined cars designed for leaded petrol could be only eight years old and cars with larger engines six years old.

Killer wasps

Wasp stings caused a fatal heart attack in a farmworker, an inquest was told. Fred Parker, 63, of Devizes, and his boss disturbed a wasps' nest as they chased a cow. His heart was already damaged by disease. Verdict: natural causes.

Shadow cleared

The former gladiator Michael Costello — Shadow in the TV series — was cleared of handling a stolen Porsche when the case against him collapsed at Southwark Crown Court in London. Costello, 42, said he was asked to drive the car.

A taxi driver was jailed for 18 months for killing a passenger in a crash on the M4. Andrew Beddis, 26, died minutes after David Griffiths, 26, from Newport, South Wales, was told by police to slow down. Cardiff Crown Court was told.

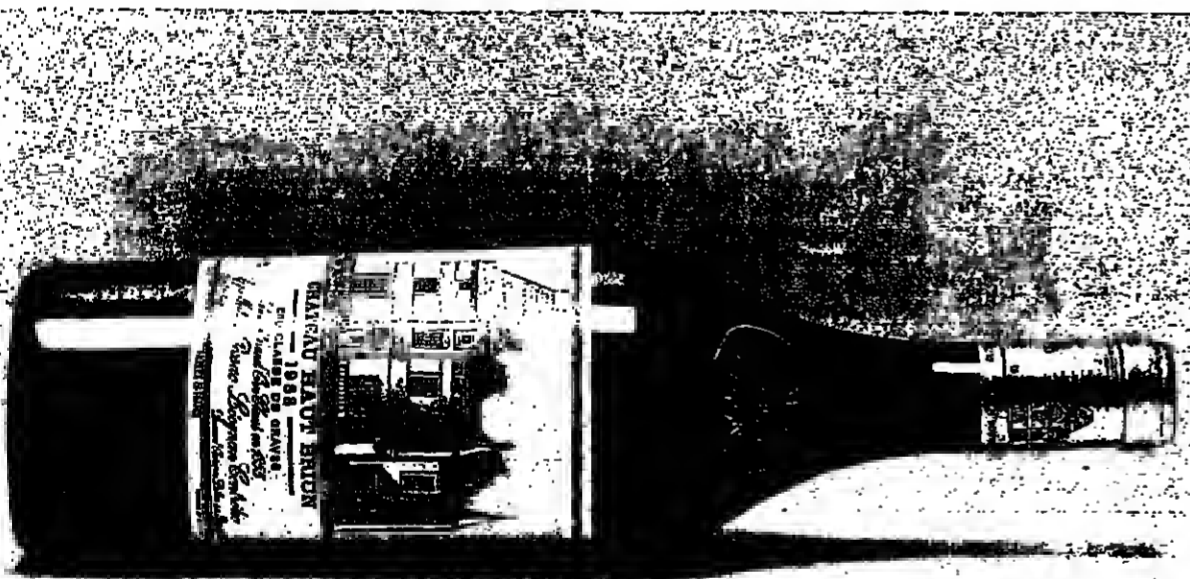
Speed failure

Colin Fallows, 48, reached 250.9mph in the jet-powered car Vampire at Elvington airfield near York in an attempt on the 258mph British land speed record. The Prime Time team has now abandoned further attempts until spring.

£529,000 violin

A rare Stradivarius violin has fetched £529,500 at Christie's in London. The Joachim Kortschak, named after two previous owners, was bought anonymously. Only 650 instruments by Antonio Stradivari (1644-1737) have survived.

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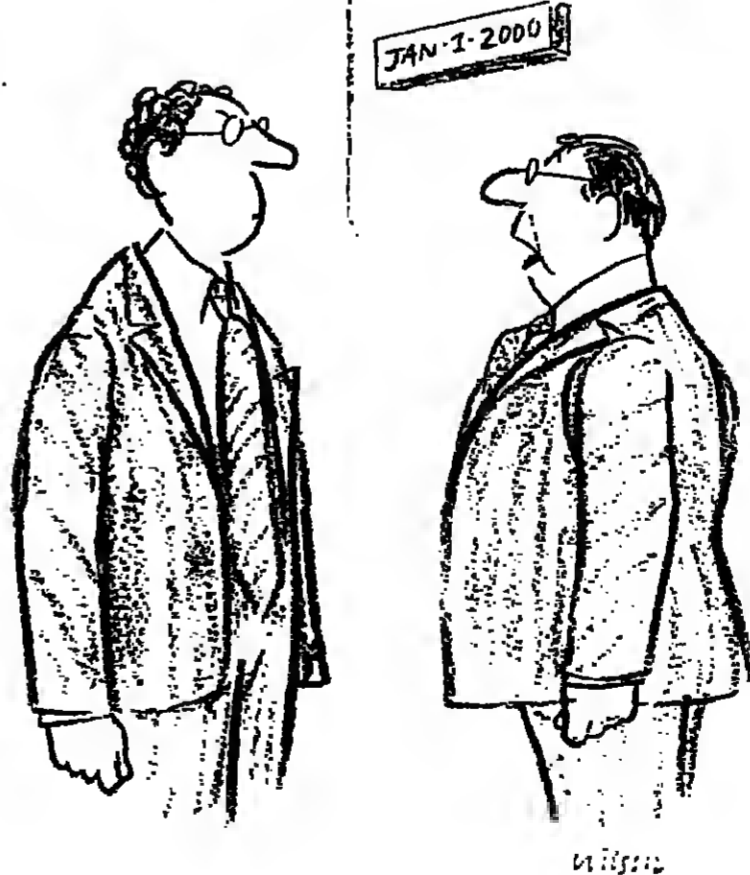
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NEWS IN BRIEF
5m cars 'at risk from lead ban'

More than five million cars in Britain could be at risk from a ban on leaded petrol, says a report from the Motor Industry Federation. The report, published on Monday, says that the current leaded petrol is not as effective as unleaded petrol in stopping engine wear and tear. It also says that the current leaded petrol is not as good as unleaded petrol in terms of performance and economy.

Killer wasps

Wasp stings caused a fatal heart attack in a farmer, it was revealed yesterday. The farmer, who was 65, died after being stung by a wasp on his arm. The wasp was identified as a common wasp, which is known to be particularly aggressive.

Shadow cleared

The shadow of a plane was seen in the sky over a village in the north of England. The shadow was seen by several people who were walking in the village. The shadow was described as being very dark and very long.

Speed failure

A car's speedometer failed to register the speed of a car on a road in the north of England. The car was travelling at 60 mph, but the speedometer only showed 40 mph. The car was stopped by the police and the driver was fined.

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Race to honour old soldier on deathbed

Police escort sped Legion d'honneur to 101-year-old veteran minutes before he died, writes Peter Foster

A BRITISH Legion official given the task of bestowing the Legion d'Honneur on a Great War soldier found himself in a race against time after learning that the 101-year-old veteran was close to death.

The French Government awarded the honour to all veterans of the First World War to mark the 80th anniversary of the Armistice. Among the recipients was to be Herbert Tompkins, who served with the Royal Artillery at the Battle of Ypres in 1915.

But Mr Tompkins was in a rapidly worsening condition in the coronary unit at the Royal Leicester Infirmary. When Peter Lockett, a British Legion county field officer, learnt that he was near death he jumped into his car and set off for the hospital.

Caught in traffic on the way, Mr Lockett realised that he needed assistance if he were to



Mr Tompkins' award, marking the Armistice

arrive in time. "When I got to Scraptoft I spotted a police car and flagged it down. I explained to the officer what I was doing and he offered to take me through. The journey would normally have taken over an hour, but the police escort cut it to 45 minutes."

1914 but was invalided out after contracting diphtheria. He then joined the horse artillery and worked on a Howitzer battery. He was wounded by shrapnel in the right foot and invalided home after the Battle of Ypres. Afterwards he learnt that his battery colleagues had been wiped out by a German shell.

During the Second World War Mr Tompkins served in the Home Guard and repaired bomb damage to the railways. His wife of 28 years, Agnes, died in 1953, leaving him to bring up his youngest son, Howard. He spent his later years watching cricket at Leicestershire's county ground, near his home, and learnt to play the piano while in his 80s.

When the family put together a brief account of his life they discovered that, during a spell of rest and recreation behind the lines on the Western Front, Mr Tompkins had a chance meeting with his brother, who was moving up to the front line. "They chatted, caught up with a few things, but that was the last time they met," Alec Tompkins said.



Herbert Tompkins celebrating his 100th birthday with Royal Artillery colleagues

Anti-terror policeman killed himself

BY A CORRESPONDENT

A SENIOR anti-terrorist officer who killed himself in the armoury of Scotland Yard had previously attempted suicide, an inquest was told yesterday. Detective Inspector John Watt, 40, shot himself in the head with a pistol in August after lapsing into the severe depression he had suffered four years earlier but had kept secret from his employers.

Paul Knapman, the Westminster Coroner, criticised Scotland Yard for failing to find out why the high-ranking officer of over 20 years' experience had taken six months' sick leave in March 1994. Recording a verdict of suicide, Dr Knapman said he would be writing to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner to urge him to "strictly review" changes on sickness procedures.

Mr Watt, who had been happily married to his wife, Susan, for nine years, spent 1994 at the South East Regional Crime Squad, which involved long hours of surveillance. During that time he attempted to kill himself in a hotel.

Titanic whisky sold for £1,093

BY SHIRLEY ENGLISH

A RARE bottle of 1912 Titanic Scotch Whisky, produced to mark the maiden voyage of the ill-fated liner, was sold for £1,093 in Glasgow yesterday.

The hand-blown green bottle of Scotch, distilled by Duncan Manning & Black of London to commemorate the launch, was bought at auction by a private Scottish collector for twice its expected price.

The London vendor, whose identity was not disclosed, was given the bottle by a relative, who in turn received it from a merchant seaman who had obtained it on a ship docked in Trieste, Italy, in 1948.

It is thought that the bottle was one of a batch given to merchant seamen in the year of the launch and then kept out of respect for the 1,502 victims. The label bears the legend, "Old Scotch Whisky Titanic Distilled and bottled by Duncan Manning & Black."

Martin Green, Christie's whisky specialist, said: "There is a bit of a mystery surrounding this bottle. No one knows the exact history of it and we can only suggest that it was produced to commemorate the launch. This is the only one I have ever seen."

Britain is a nation proud to be puzzled

BY TIM JONES

BRITAIN has become a nation addicted to solving puzzles with nearly three quarters of the population regularly confronting challenges from the intricacies of *The Times* crossword to simple coffee-break teasers.

Puzzle-solving, a MORI poll shows, is more important to many people than making love and is an obsession that spans the generation gap. One woman in three, it appears, spends more time on puzzle solving than love-making while one man in four admitted the same.

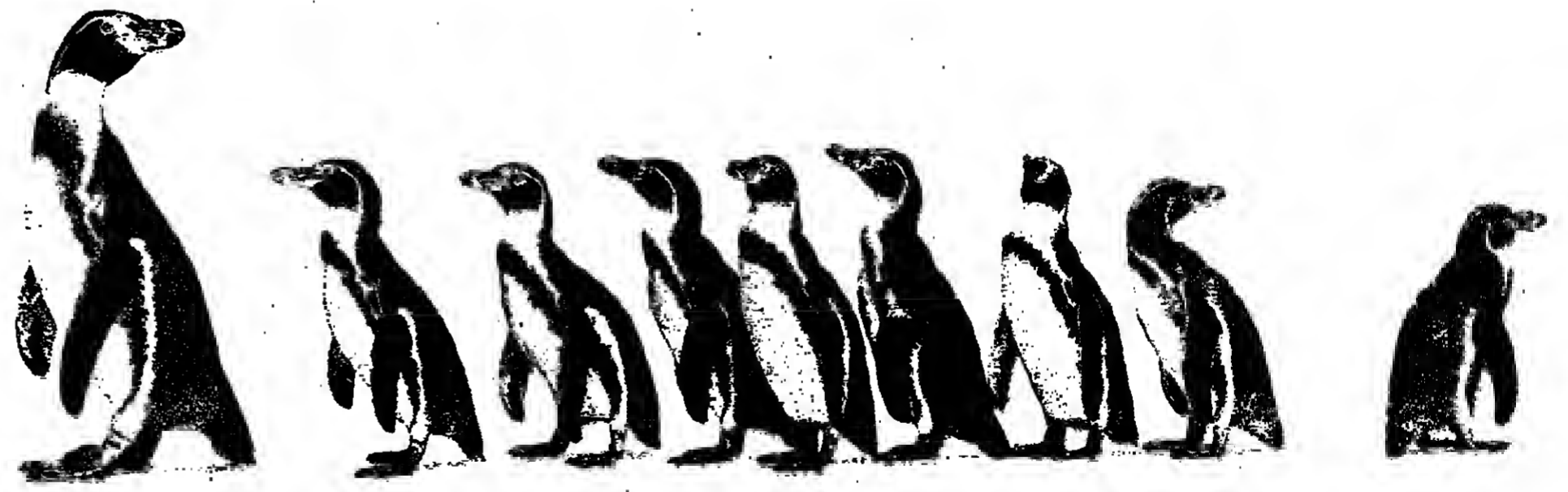
The poll shows that half of those who do puzzles attempt them every day, with a fifth devoting more than an hour to the pastime.

Puzzle-solving is more popular in Scotland and the North of England, where people spend more time on them than southerners. Even young people, the survey showed, are hooked, with three quarters of 15 to 24 year olds tackling them, a quarter of them every day. While the sitting room is the most popular place for puzzle solving for six out of ten people, only one in twelve takes puzzles to bed or the kitchen.

People who admit to doing puzzles in the lavatory spend up to an hour there. Not surprisingly, only one in a hundred tries to do them in the bath, and one in ten admits tackling them at work, with men more likely than women to waste their boss's time.

The poll was conducted to mark the launch of *Carol Vorderman's Puzzle Challenge*, a magazine that offers a range of puzzles for all abilities.

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Who would be last past the post?

James Landale looks at who might suffer most if plans for PR at the European election were abandoned

THE Tories and the Liberal Democrats would almost certainly be the biggest losers if the first-past-the-post system were reintroduced for next summer's European elections. Both parties would secure fewer MEPs than they had expected to win under proportional representation. But the reselection process would also reopen internal Tory wounds over Europe. And the Liberal Democrats would have lost one of their most cherished electoral reforms.

By contrast, Labour would be likely to secure more seats in Strasbourg than they had expected to under PR. The many anti-PR ministers and backbenchers would also have secured a victory in their battle against PR for the Commons. But perhaps the biggest losers would be the 228 candidates which the three main parties have already selected and placed on ordered regional lists. Because of the way that proportional representation works, many of them would have had a fair idea of whether they had a chance of being elected. Without PR, their political futures are entirely up in the air.

None of the main parties have established ways of reselecting their candidates for the present 84 Euro-constituencies. Nothing can guarantee them securing seats under the old system.

Ironically, a return to the old system might actually give a fresh chance to those would-be MEPs who failed to secure winnable positions on the PR party lists. For example, two pro-European rebel Tory MEPs — John Stevens and Brendan Donnelly — might now try to remain in Strasbourg.

In terms of seats, the Tories would suffer most. The party has 18 MEPs and under proportional representation had expected to win at least 28 if the electorate voted as they did in last year's general election.



Some of the possible losers: the Liberal Democrats Baroness Nicholson and Liz Lynne, and the Tories Timothy Kirkhope and Jonathan Evans

Under the present system, they would be less likely to make such a gain and might even lose seats.

The whole process of reselecting their candidates would almost certainly result in a fresh bout of battles between pro-European and Eurosceptic Tories. Many Eurosceptics failed to secure winnable positions on the Euro-lists and would try again under the old system. Without knowing the

new selection procedure it is difficult to predict who might be under threat but it could include Lord Bethell and the former MPs Timothy Kirkhope and Jonathan Evans.

The Liberal Democrats would also not get as many seats as they had hoped for under PR. They had expected to raise their number of MEPs from just two to about 12. This is much less likely with first-past-the-post. Those Liberal

Democrat candidates most under threat are the former MPs Liz Lynne, Baroness Nicholson, Hugh Dykes and Chris Davies.

More generally, the loss of PR for the European elections would be a fearful blow to the Liberal Democrats' co-operation with Labour and for Paddy Ashdown in particular. Many Liberal Democrats are already concerned that the Government will not back the

Jenkins Commission recommendations of PR for the Commons. Failure to get PR even for Europe would be a disaster and could put the Liberal Democrat leader under fresh pressure to abandon his co-operation with Tony Blair.

In terms of seats, Labour would do the best. Its present number of 60 MEPs is expected to be cut to about 40 under PR. Under the old system, many of the incumbent MEPs

Act is the weapon of last resort

THE Parliament Act gives the House of Commons the right to force through legislation without the Lords' agreement (James Landale writes). If the European Elections Bill died, the Government could reintroduce it in the next session, which begins on Tuesday. The Government would use its majority and the "guillotine" to rush it through the Commons and send it to the Lords. The Speaker would certify the new Bill as being covered by the Parliament Act.

If the Lords rejected the new Bill, the Government could invoke the Act: it would gain Royal Assent and become law. But the peers would be unlikely to reject the Bill outright at Second Reading. They would probably want to debate and amend it and could in theory go on as long as they liked.

Upper House has had the upper hand

Labour is in a mess of its own making

BY JAMES LANDALE
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE House of Lords has already inflicted more defeats on Tony Blair's Government than the last Tory administration suffered during its worst single annual parliamentary session. Even before yesterday's latest round

of legislative ping-pong, Labour had been defeated 38 times since last year's general election.

Most of the defeats — 36 — affected substantive legislation. The other two came on specific issues — an advisory vote against a minister who had been too rude to a peer and a symbolic vote against the beef-on-the-bone ban.

In contrast, the greatest Tory number of Lords defeats in one session (1985-86) was 22. Between 1979 and 1996, the average number was 13.5 a session. Although this analysis might look bleak to government business managers, they should remember Labour's defeats in the 1970s. Between 1974 and 1979, the Wilson and Callaghan Governments were defeated 362

times. In the 1975-76 session, Government defeats totalled 126.

One of 1998's most prominent defeats came when peers threw out a move to make the age of homosexual consent 16. Luckily for ministers, this did not count, being an unwhipped vote on an issue of conscience.

LABOUR has partly got itself to blame for the messy row over the European Elections Bill. The Government has certainly got a better case than is widely assumed and has constitutional precedent on its side over the powers of the Lords. But the Government has weakened its own position, as was shown by Tony Blair's edgy performance at Prime Minister's Questions.

Many Labour MPs are so unenthusiastic, if not outright hostile, less because of their doubts about closed lists than because of the way their party chose its candidates. The central imposition of candidates, switching Euro-MPs from one part of the country to another and pushing troublemakers to the bottom of regional lists, has caused a lot of resentment. This has undermined the legitimacy of the candidates and made it harder for Labour to defend closed lists. Labour would have had a stronger case if its candidates have been picked regionally on a one member/one vote basis as the Tory and Liberal Democrat ones were.

As I argued on Tuesday, the choice between open and closed lists is finely balanced rather than of great democratic principle. Closed lists allow parties to fix the order of candidates and so who will be elected first, while open lists permit voters to rank the order of candidates. But open lists encourage infighting between candi-

dates of the same party and produce perverse results. Labour would have done better to offer a choice between a party list and voting for individual candidates. Although most voters would probably opt for the party list, there would, at least, have been a choice. At an earlier stage of the Bill, the Government did consider this option but believed it was confusing. Unfortunately, this is territory for psephological anoraks — as Jack Straw admits to being — and this compromise is not helped by being known as the

ness of ministers to compromise is partly because they see the intransigence of the Lords as reinforcing their campaign to remove the voting rights of hereditary peers. Tory motives are more complicated. Tories believe they can gain from appearing on the side of democratic rights versus Labour centralisation. With the threat of abolition over their heads, some hereditary peers are in no mood to co-operate with the Government. However, the Tories might gain fewer seats under first-past-the-post than under PR and would face a revival of internal feuding in a new round of candidate selections.

The Tories may regret their fun and games this week. They have broken the spirit of the conventions on how far the Lords should defy the Commons. They have also highlighted the issue of the elected House versus hereditary peers. This is just how Tony Blair wants the issue framed.

However, the Government could lose this advantage unless it provides a more convincing link between abolition of hereditaries and a long-term replacement. It should offer cast-iron assurances about the timetable for the interim stage and over the appointment of new peers. It is anyway in Labour's interests to move quickly since any reformed House, even just of appointed peers, could be even more awkward than the current one.

Peter RIDDELL
ON POLITICS

Belgian option. If Labour had adopted more democratic internal procedures to answer the "control freak" charge, and had offered a compromise, the Government might have been in a stronger position.

Yet the argument has moved on from the merits of closed versus open lists to cruder political calculations. Many Labour MPs and ministers would have been happier to retain first-past-the-post, not least because it is likely to produce more Labour MEPs in next June's elections than under proportional representation. Moreover, the unwilling-

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Fathers will get cash on death of wife

BY ALEXANDRA FREAN, SOCIAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

MEN with dependent children are to qualify for the first time for a special bereavement allowance on the death of their wives, under government plans to reform widows' benefits.

Alistair Darling, the Social Security Secretary, told the Commons yesterday that the reforms would rectify an inherent injustice in the current welfare system, which for half a century has allowed women men to claim a special "widows benefit" when their spouse dies, but had provided nothing for men in a similar situation.

The move follows a decision by the Government not to contest a case brought in the European Court of Human Rights by a Kevin Willis, a widower from Bristol with two children who claimed that men should have the same benefits as women.

Mr Darling said that society had changed dramatically since the benefit was first introduced in 1948, when most women did not work and had

no pension of their own. "Today seven out of ten married women work. Almost as many as the eight out of ten men who work. The world has changed and the benefits system needs to reflect those changes," he said.

He added that it was simply unfair that the 15,000 husbands bereaved each year got no help. It was even more galling when one considered that 40 per cent of the bereaved women currently claiming widows' benefit were in the top half of the income bracket.

The purpose of the reforms is to target the money where it is most needed — namely, for child rearing. To achieve this, the Government is to withdraw the weekly widow's pension from widows with no children.

An estimated 20,000 women will lose entitlement to the benefit in the first year of the changes, to be introduced in April 2001.

At present around 300,000 women a year get a lump sum of £1,000 after their husbands



Kevin Willis took his case to Europe

die. A widowed mother with one child gets £74 a week, plus £1 for every other child. Widows aged over 45 get a pension of up to £64 a week.

Under the new system, all widows and widowers will get a lump sum of £2,000 on the death of their spouse. Those with dependent children will receive a weekly payment of around £85 a week.

But widows and widowers aged over 45 with no dependent children will receive a weekly benefit for only six months only. At present wid-

ow's benefit does not help people on income support as it is counted as part of their income. Under the new system, the first £10 of the benefit will be ignored when calculating income, to ensure that the poorest claimants are at least £10 a week better off.

The changes will cost around £140 million in the scheme's first year, but will gradually fall each year as all men eligible are brought into the net. By 2020, Mr Darling said, they would produce a saving of £500 million a year.

The Government had originally been expected to meanst widows' benefit, but decided against doing so amid fears of a revolt by Labour backbenchers.

Mr Willis, whose wife Marlene, a council housing officer died of cancer two years ago, described the reforms as a "victory for commonsense" and a great relief for his children, Ross, 7, and Natasha, 9.

"My children suffered a grievous loss when their mother died. It is unfair they should suffer financially because they lost her and not me."



Alistair Darling yesterday, rectifying what he called an inherent injustice in welfare

February vote for Davies successor

BY ROLAND WATSON

THE contest between Alun Michael and Rhodri Morgan to become first minister of Wales is likely to be delayed until February at the earliest, it emerged yesterday.

Welsh Labour Party chiefs meeting today will widen the voting mechanism to give every party member in Wales a say. The change to one member one vote should in theory help boost the chances of Mr Morgan, the maverick MP for Cardiff West, considering his strong support on the ground.

But supporters of Mr Michael, the new Welsh Secretary, believe that the extra time could help their man — Tony Blair's preferred runner — by giving him the chance to travel round the hustings. Until Ron Davies's resignation, he had shown little interest in the Welsh assembly.

Mr Michael's supporters say he is to base his campaign on attacking Welsh nationalists, bitter enemies at local government level, to outflank Mr Morgan, viewed as a softer touch on Plaid Cymru.

in a mess making

Euro blueprint 'spells ruin for business'

BY PHILIP WEBSTER, POLITICAL EDITOR

GORDON BROWN is signing up to a new policy blueprint for Europe that spells ruin for business, the Conservatives will claim today.

As Oskar Lafontaine, the German finance minister, holds talks with the Chancellor in London, John Redwood will say that he is agreeing to proposals that will mean higher taxes, damage to investment in the City of London and more regulations of labour and market products.

The shadow industry minister will say in a lecture to Cambridge University that the new left-wing policy manifesto *The New European Way - Economic Reform in the Framework of EMU* means that Mr Lafontaine is asking the rest of Europe to sign up to the same higher taxes and costly regulations that will be imposed in Germany.

"Mr Brown has fallen for it, hook line and sinker," he will say.

Downing Street and the Treasury yesterday denounced the reaction to the document as "hysterical" and pointed out that it had been drawn up by senior British officials close to Mr Brown. "It is

hardly going to be a raving Left document with that authorship," one said. The Prime Minister's spokesman said it contained a "New Labour agenda".

Mr Redwood will accuse Europe's socialist governments of aiming for a "socialist fortress Europe" to defend them against global capitalism.

"They will discover, if they are allowed to build it, that it is as proof against the forces of international capital as a sandcastle built beneath the high tide mark. Fortress Europe will damage our ability to prosper in a dynamic world economy but it will not protect us from the forces of international money and trade."

A multi-millionaire businessman who wants to reduce Britain's involvement in the European Union formally launched a new political party yesterday.

The Democratic Party will be led by its founder and backer Geoff Southall, 58, who worked as an agent for the late Sir James Goldsmith at the last general election. Mr Southall said that the Democratic Party would campaign on a wide sweep of issues.

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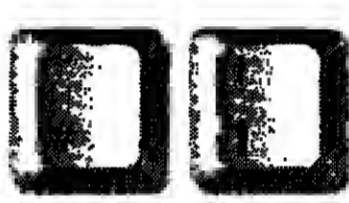
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Short warns against quick fix on debt

Minister tells Church that campaign to aid Third World could line pockets of tyrants, writes Dominic Kennedy

THE church-backed campaign to cancel Third World debt for the millennium was criticised yesterday by Clare Short, the International Development Secretary. She said that the move would penalise poor countries that paid their debts, and risked enriching tyrants.

Ms Short told the General Synod of the Church of England: "Poverty is not all the fault of evil Western bankers. Corrupt dictators, weak and craven governments hold back their people across the world. We should not call for debt to be relieved if the result would be more spending on arms or palaces or corruption."

Ms Short risked stepping into a lions' den by giving her message directly to church leaders, who are among the most prominent backers of the Jubilee 2000 campaign to write off debts.

She had been warmly introduced to the synod by Dr George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who in Addis Ababa in January said that more people faced death because of debt than were killed by the Atlantic slave trade.

He told his African audience that the critics of debt release were "likely to focus on images of corrupt and dictatorial governments, tribalism, arms

sales to governments that violently suppress their own people, and so on."

Ms Short won two standing ovations after arguing that campaigners were mistaken in demanding unconditional debt relief and unilateral action by Britain rather than a united approach by Western countries. She called for the international campaign for debt cancellation to be broadened into a wider alliance to eliminate poverty.

"There is a real danger that good people will believe that debt relief is the 'magic bullet' to end all poverty, and that debt is the cause of poverty. This is untrue," Ms Short told



Short said poverty not all fault of evil bankers

the synod, meeting in London. "Debt relief should not go to all poor countries; it should support those committed to poverty eradication. It should not be unconditional and it is not better if it is unilateral. These are slogans. Some very poor countries are not heavily

indebted because they struggled to pay their debts. If debt relief is our only answer, they get no help."

Bangladesh, devastated by floods and one of the poorest countries in the world, had little foreign debt and neither had Malawi, she said.

She criticised Jubilee 2000 for demanding unilateral action, pointing out, for example, that the Central American nations badly damaged by Hurricane Mitch had little debt to Britain. "We could go and say we will write off unilaterally. It might impress the press, but it's not the right way to go."

She also argued against campaigners who wanted to write off "odious debt", such as that bequeathed by South Africa's apartheid rulers to the Government headed by Nelson Mandela.

"The ANC Government - people who suffered and died and were tortured and imprisoned - have decided for the sake of their country and its economic reputation that they are going to pay it. We should not be telling them this is odious and they should not pay it; we should be supporting their right to decide the best way to manage their country."

A Lambeth Palace source said that Ms Short's speech was not considered critical of Dr Carey. "The archbishop agrees entirely that debt relief is part of a global campaign to relieve poverty and it is the shared objective of Church and Government to eliminate poverty."



Anthony Onyekwely checks crypts at the mausoleum in Streatham Park cemetery

High-rise answer to shortage of graves

By ALEXANDRA FREAN SOCIAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

A CEMETERY in South London has found an ingenious solution to the problem of where to put the dead now that many burial grounds are nearly full. Instead of burying people, the cemetery in Streatham Park has opened Britain's first multi-storey mausoleum.

The square, polished granite structure, about the size of a large house, is the first community mausoleum to be built in Britain this century. Big enough to house 180 coffins, it has already found four occupants since it opened in September. Prices start at £6,000.

Jane Farrin, of Service Corporation International, the American company that owns the cemetery, said two of four smaller "family sized" mausoleums attached to the main structure had been sold for up to £100,000 each. The walls of the building are made of grisly granite tiles stacked on top of each other. There are five horizontal layers and six vertical columns.

Unlike Victorian mausoleums, which were underground, coffins are placed in niches from the outside; they can be lifted and coffins put in place by a hydraulic lift. Relatives can place memorial plaques on their tile or decorate it with flowers. A portico protects visitors from rain.

SCI has put in a planning application to build another mausoleum in Leatherhead.

Clergy urged to fight big business for funerals

By DOMINIC KENNEDY

THE Church of England was urged to consider setting up a freephone dial-a-funeral service to compete with multinational firms of undertakers. A Church-run "pay now, die later" insurance scheme, rivaling commercial policies, was also suggested at the General Synod.

The ideas came from Tom Sutcliffe, a lay member, who was proposing a motion regretting the commercial pressures on some funeral directors which he said discouraged funerals in parish churches and concealed or denied the pastoral and spiritual truths of death and dying.

"Many small firms of funeral directors, still trading under their old family names, were bought up to become part of Service Corporation International plc. Funerals are a thriving multimillion-pound market," said Mr Sutcliffe, of Southwark diocese in London. "Unless our clergy get their

acts together they will be bypassed by funeral directors as too inefficient and costly; inefficient because clergy often cannot be reliably contacted when funeral arrangements are being made; costly because clergy will encourage the use of our parish churches, and that will cut down funeral turnover and reduce profits or inflate charges."

Mr Sutcliffe asked the synod: "How often now can one get a priest at the end of the phone, rather than a taped message? And how many people who have just suffered a profound loss, a new widow, say, want to confide such an intense personal thing as grief to a recording machine and then wait to see if anybody calls back?"

"Undertakers and funeral directors, dedicated to being professionally nice, can be a bit gruesome. Their respect for 'the deceased' earns a substantial fee. Their business is neces-

sary. Unfortunately we, their clients, are always vulnerable people and that's a disadvantage. Questioning the fees or shopping around may suggest you don't care enough for the dead."

The synod was asked to consider reusing old graves for new corpses because churchyards are running out of space. "In other countries which have different burial traditions, it is accepted that a grave is the hallowed site for a process of material change rather than a perpetual resting place for remains," said a report prepared for the debate by the Church's group on funeral services.

The synod overwhelmingly supported the motion regretting that commercial pressures discouraged church funerals. The motion also called for a possible review of the law covering the reuse of graves and the reopening of closed churchyards.

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Currie condemns Tory 'incompetence' on BSE

Former minister tells inquiry that 'crass' attitudes made the problem worse, reports Michael Hornsby

EDWINA CURRIE, the former Health Minister, has attacked other Tory ex-ministers for their handling of "mad cow" disease and other public health risks. In written evidence to the BSE inquiry, she condemns their performance at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as "crass and incompetent" and says their officials were "blockheadedly ignorant".

Mrs Currie, who was forced to resign from her ministerial position in 1988 after the salmonella-in-eggs furore, will open a new phase in the inquiry next Monday, as the first of more than 20 former Tory ministers giving evidence over the next three weeks.

Five presided over the Ministry of Agriculture during the last Government — John MacGregor, John Gummer, Gillian Shephard, William Walde-

WHO'S WHO IN THE INQUIRY

Inquiry chaired by Sir Nicholas Phillips, Court of Appeal judge who presided over the Maxwell case. The two other committee members are June Bridgeman, former senior civil servant, and Malcolm Ferguson-Smith, professor of pathology at Cambridge. Inquiry set up on December 22, 1997, and opened on March 9. So far 83 days of hearings have been held and 287 witnesses have given oral and written evidence. Some 3,000 lever-arch files of documents have been collected. Their weight is so great that structural engineers have had to be called to test the strength of the floor. The inquiry is expected to report by June 30.

grave and Douglas Hogg. Also scheduled to appear are Kenneth Clarke, Virginia Bottomley and Stephen Dorrell, all former Health Secretaries. The former Prime Ministers Baroness Thatcher and John Major have been invited to submit statements and may be called to give oral evidence.

In her statement, Mrs Currie says: "I consider that the entire approach of MAFF from the 1980s onward to issues of public health linked to infection in the food chain was wrong.

"It was crass, incompetent, hostile, dangerous and compounded problems instead of eradicating them. The ministry that should have been responsible for clean food instead supported and connived at the worst operations in farming and animal husbandry, derided accurate warnings

dramatic collapse in egg sales by claiming that most egg production in Britain was infected with salmonella. Mrs Currie says that the ministry responded to her claim by refusing "to believe that a foodstuff as widespread and innocuous as eggs could be the cause of a food-poisoning epidemic".

When she wrote an account of her time in Government, ministry officials tried to get sections of the manuscript deleted, she claims. She says she resigned after being told that egg producers were threatening the Government with writs, but this had turned out to be untrue.

Mrs Currie told *The Times* yesterday: "I am not singling out any one minister for criticism. The whole approach of MAFF was wrong. It was only concerned with the economic state of its industry. It had no interest whatever in the public health aspects of the production of food."

Mrs Currie said that she believed the ministry had not devoted the effort it should have done to some crucial BSE re-



Edwina Currie: "The ministry connived at the worst operations in farming"

search because it was afraid of what the results might be. "There is still no diagnostic test for BSE in living animals. This is outrageous. I mean, we have slaughtered millions and millions of them. My suggestion, my deep, dark hint, is that MAFF did not want a test because they did not want to know how serious the problem was. As long as MAFF could

keep saying, 'It is not a problem,' or, 'It is under control,' then they could satisfy their ministers and attempt to satisfy the public. But, of course, there was a problem and it was not under control."


Mrs Currie will be the 288th witness to give oral and written evidence to the inquiry since it opened on March 9 in Lambeth, southeast London.

Distrust and lack of co-operation between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Department of Health has been a persistent theme. While ministry officials have insisted that public health was a top priority and that they concealed nothing, their counterparts in the Department of Health have spoken of a suspicion that they were being kept in the dark.


HISTORY OF MISTAKES AND DELAYS

- Among the main facts to emerge so far:
- First case of BSE was diagnosed in December 1985. Finding dismissed as inconclusive by Gerald Wells, head of neuropathology at the Central Veterinary Laboratory, who realised his mistake 21 months later.
- Ministry vets and scientists knew for sure of the existence of BSE from November 1986, but the Government's Chief Medical Officer was not told until 16 months later, in March 1988.
- The ministry banned the use of meat and bone meal (the suspected source of BSE) in cattle feed in July 1988, but did not recall unused stocks from farms or those already ordered from feed merchants. That probably allowed up to 32,000 more cattle to be infected with BSE.
- Professor Richard Southwood, in his report in February 1989, said that BSE posed a "remote" risk to human beings, but failed to recommend an immediate ban on consumption of all potentially dangerous cattle parts. This was not done until nine months later.
- As early as 1990 the ministry was aware of concern that abattoirs were not enforcing controls to keep infected material out of the food chain, but did nothing serious about it until 1995.


WHO WILL GIVE EVIDENCE NEXT

- JOHN MacGREGOR**
Minister of Agriculture, 1987-1989



Scheduled to appear before inquiry on December 2. In office during crucial early period when first BSE cases emerged. Shown initially to have opposed any government funding for BSE cattle slaughter, delaying action against the disease. Credited, however, with pushing through the cattle offal ban in 1989, allegedly against resistance from his own officials.

- JOHN GUMMER**
Minister of Agriculture 1989-93


Scheduled to appear before the inquiry on December 9. Criticised for saying in 1990 that beef was "perfectly safe" to eat and for allegedly putting pressure on Chief Medical Officer to back such statements. Expected to put up vigorous defence of his role, arguing that such criticisms are based on hindsight and not on the reality at the time.

- DOUGLAS HOGG**
Minister of Agriculture 1995-1997 (May)


Scheduled to appear on December 16. Had bad luck to be in office when likely link between BSE and CJD discovered. To some extent carried the can for inaction of predecessors. Took steps to tighten crucial abattoir controls. Also wanted the Government to hold judicial inquiry into BSE but was turned down by rest of the Cabinet.

- STEPHEN DORRELL**
Health Secretary 1995-1997 (May)


Scheduled to appear on November 30. Made lateful disclosure to Parliament on March 20, 1996, that BSE was probable cause of new variant CJD. Has been criticised for implying that the risk ended in 1989, even though he knew that infected material could have been entering food chain long after that because of failures of abattoir controls.

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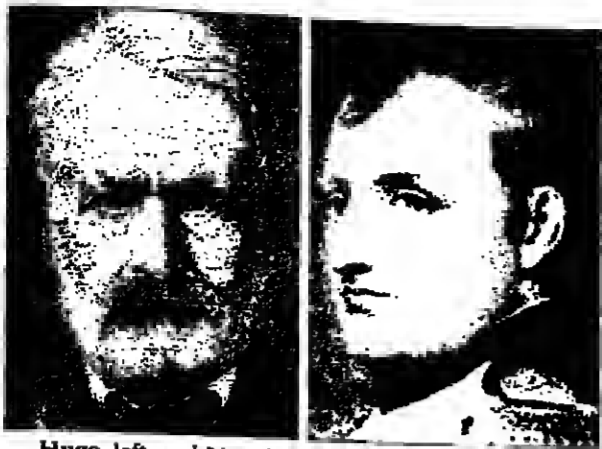
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Fans of euro recruit Napoleon for hard-sell currency campaign



Hugo, left, and Napoleon Bonaparte: put forward as backers of a single European currency

HISTORY'S big guns, from Plato to Napoleon to Victor Hugo, have been wheeled out to endorse the single European currency as the French propaganda campaign for the euro's launch — only 42 days away — begins in earnest. Historians have been trawling archives to demonstrate that the great and good have always supported the idea, even if they did not know it.

Even Plato was in favour of monetary union, reports Ben Macintyre in Paris

whole of Europe, which will be a great advantage to trade." The writer Victor Hugo (Acts and Words) written in 1855, he argued for the establishment of "a continental currency, both metallic and fiduciary, covering the free activity of 200 million people; this money would replace and absorb all today's absurd varieties of coin, with their images of princelings, those symbols of misery."

ferent currencies was had economics, although his reasoning was vague. "This monetary variety is a cause of impoverishment for, in the comings and goings of cash, to increase the variety is to increase the friction; to increase the friction is to reduce the circulation. In money, as in everything else, circulation is unity."

ideal model of the city, Plato tackled the question of monetary uniformity, writes Catherine Véglia. "Innumerable sorts of coinage circulated among the hundreds of Greek towns, and the philosopher proposed a communal money that would be reserved for public expenses, wars, diplomacy and external commerce."

flourished in economic treatises of the 16th century," Ms Véglia writes. The economist Johann Agricola of Eisleben, for example, offered a view that would not sound out of place in modern Brussels: "If we only had a single God... a single currency and coins of good alloy, then everything would be fine in the world."

Anatole Kaletsky, page 24

Rome asylum hint provokes Ankara anger

FROM RICHARD OWEN IN ROME

ABDULLAH OCALAN, the fugitive separatist Kurdish leader arrested in Rome a week ago, appeared yesterday for Italy's main condition for granting him political asylum by declaring that he had renounced terrorism.

strators in Rome set fire to himself in protest yesterday afternoon. His fellow demonstrators tried to smother the flames, but Red Cross officials said the man had been taken to hospital with severe burns.

give asylum to a man Ankara has detested and hunted for 20 years have sparked a wave of anti-Italian feeling in Turkey, with attacks on Italian-owned businesses. There have also been clashes between Kurds and Turks in Brussels, Bonn and other European cities.

He also appealed to Italy to "mediate between us and Turkey to find a political solution to the Kurdish question."

A Kurdish man, 25, who set himself alight in Moscow in a similar protest on Tuesday has died in hospital.

Washington urged Signor D'Alema this week to hand Mr Ocalan to Turkey, arguing that he was "a terrorist who should be denied asylum".

The move brought Italy closer to an outright confrontation with Turkey, which has demanded Mr Ocalan's extradition repeatedly. "Italy to give Ocalan asylum" was the blunt prediction in *La Repubblica*.

Mr Ocalan, 49, was arrested after arriving on a flight from Moscow last Thursday. Ankara says that Mr Ocalan, who founded the PKK (Kurdish Workers' Party) in 1978, is responsible for the 30,000 deaths caused by the Kurdish insurgency in southeastern Turkey over the past 14 years.

In a disclosure likely to cause Signor D'Alema's centre-left Government further embarrassment, *Corriere della Sera* reported yesterday that Mr Ocalan had come to Rome after learning of an appeal on his behalf by 50 Green, left-wing and Communist MPs and senators, who had assured him that Italy would give him refuge.

Massimo D'Alema, the Italian Prime Minister, told the Rome parliament on Tuesday that the renunciation of terrorism by Mr Ocalan was "the minimum we require for our country to be able to process his request for asylum... Italy does not intend to act as host to terrorist activities".

The Italian Left is sympathetic to the PKK: the PKK-dominated "Kurdish parliament in exile" was allowed to meet in the Italian parliament recently, to Ankara's fury.

Large numbers of the endangered species are being killed illegally to make the world's most expensive shawls which fetch thousands of pounds in London, Paris and New York.

Chinese poachers slaughter rare Tibet antelope

By MICHAEL DYNES

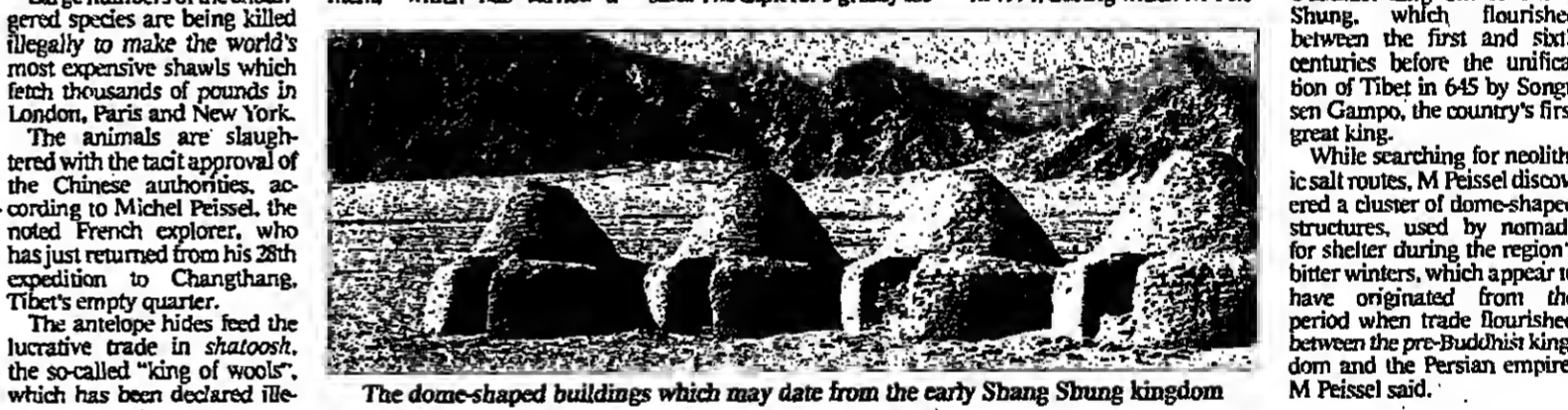
CHINESE poachers are using automatic weapons to harvest the fur of the exotic Tibetan antelope, the *chiru*, according to an account by a leading French anthropologist.

gal throughout much of the world since the 1970s. An attempt to protect Tibet's endangered wildlife by creating a national park has done little to safeguard the antelope.

blind eye to the slaughter", M Peissel said. Tibetan hunters, equipped with muzzle-loaded shotguns, have traditionally killed the antelope for meat and fur. But Chinese poachers are killing on a huge scale, M Peissel said. The explorer's grizzly discovery was made during his most recent expedition to Changthang, a region the size of Greenland, and one of the largest unspoilt ecological zones after the South Pole.

An account of an earlier expedition to the empty quarter in 1994, during which M Peissel discovered the source of the Mekong river, in the upper reaches of Tibet, is published in a new book, *The Last Barbarians*, released today.

While searching for neolithic salt routes, M Peissel discovered a cluster of dome-shaped structures, used by nomads for shelter during the region's bitter winters, which appear to have originated from the period when trade flourished between the pre-Buddhist kingdom and the Persian empire, M Peissel said.



The dome-shaped buildings which may date from the early Shang Shung kingdom

Act is the weapon of last resort
The Parliament has given the House of Commons the right to force through legislation without the Lords' agreement (James...)

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Marcos victory on gold fortune

Honolulu: The Hawaii Supreme Court has reversed a \$22 billion (£13 billion) judgment against Ferdinand Marcos, the late former President of the Philippines, and his wife Imelda for allegedly stealing gold bullion from a treasure hunter. With interest, that award had increased to \$43 billion.

The court said on Tuesday that the evidence was too speculative to support the claim by the late Roger Roxas that he discovered boxes containing \$22 billion of gold bullion while hunting for treasure north of Manila in 1971.

Roxas said that Marcos learnt of the discovery and ordered his troops to confiscate whatever gold Roxas had found. The booty included a golden Buddha.

The treasure is believed to have been buried by Japanese troops while they occupied the area during the Second World War. (AP)

Drink ban threatens the peacekeepers

UNITED NATIONS peacekeepers in Cyprus are in a mutinous mood after their newly installed woman chief cracked down on drinking and undermined the popular annual golf tournament.

Dame Ann Hercus, the tough new UN head from New Zealand, has thrown into disarray the drinking habits of the peacekeepers, including Britain's 320 Blue Berets, by ordering several bars in UN areas of the divided island to close at midnight.

Golfers received the news as they were teeing up for this weekend's all-island championship at the UN's headquarters in Nicosia. The tournament is being sponsored by a leading whisky company.

While the 60 or so participants will not be able to buy anything stronger than a Coke at the bar, they will be allowed to savour the first prize — a three-litre bottle of Ballantines — provided the winner is in generous mood. Golfers have been told they can bring their own liquor to the club and

Cyprus crackdown on duty-free sales risks UN mutiny, writes Michael Theodoulou in Nicosia

store it in lockers. The sales ban was announced in a letter to the club's 80 members, including British diplomats and expatriates, from Colonel Chris Coats, the UN's chief of staff. However, Col Coats, an enthusiastic golfer himself, is not being blamed for emptying the bar's shelves of all but soft drinks, peanuts and crisps. The rumblings of discontent are directed at Dame Ann, who headed the review. "She's got a real puritanical streak," one officer said.

The ban on alcohol sales was the result of a "routine review" of recreational facilities, a UN statement said yesterday. But Cypriot sources linked the ban to investigations into the apparent illegal sale to the local tourist market of up to \$2 million (£1.25 million) of duty-free alcohol and

tobacco by UN personnel. Preliminary indications were that Irish personnel were among those involved. However, a formal report sent to UN headquarters two weeks ago reportedly gave the golf club bar a clean bill of health.

There are suspicions that the real reason for the ban was a recent incident in which a Norwegian civilian staff member allegedly refused to stop for a breath test after leaving the bar and ploughed his vehicle into police barricades. Col Coats reminded staff they were under the jurisdiction of military police and random breath tests were UN policy.

Dame Ann, admired as dynamic by some but regarded as abrasive by her critics, is said to have been responsible for some blood-letting among staff since her arrival in the

summer. The UN's long-standing spokesman in Nicosia, Waldemar Rokosewki, a Pole, recently exchanged his job on the sunny island for a hardship posting in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, partly because of a reported clash of personalities.

"The softest thing about Dame Ann is her teeth," said a source at UN headquarters in New York.

Her main task is promoting a settlement of the island's seemingly intractable problem and a diplomat in Nicosia said she was doing "an excellent job in difficult circumstances".

More changes are certainly on the cards, among them a decision by Dame Ann to actively pursue a general directive from New York to tackle male chauvinism. From January, British and other peacekeepers will have to attend a workshop on the use of "gender-sensitive language" after the UN deemed that too many internal memos, documents and publications were addressed to male personnel only.



Dame Ann Hercus: image of a no-nonsense woman with a puritanical streak

Mugabe property white fa

Cash-hit republic seeks break from Russian rule

FROM ANNA BLUNDY IN MOSCOW

THE charismatic 36-year-old millionaire President of the Buddhist autonomous republic of Kalmykia has announced that it may secede from Russia if federal government subsidies fail to arrive.

Kirsan Ilyumzhinov accuses Russia of imposing a blockade and insists that since Kalmykia has, in effect, been removed from the Russian Federation, he would like that status formalised. He says Kalmykia should be an associated member of the federation rather than a constituent republic.

"Whereas Chechnya is still receiving certain sums of federal money, Kalmykia is not getting anything for paying student grants, or for vaccinating children, or for keeping maternity homes or for implementing a programme for combating plague," Mr Ilyumzhinov said on Russian television. "So, in fact, we are not a part of Russia. If this is so, we shall urge Moscow to give us the status of an associated member, or just secede."

His stance is more a request for funds than a declaration of war, but after the disastrous attempted secession by Chechnya, resulting in the bloody 1994-96 war with Russia, Moscow is keen to keep its re-

publics and regions in tow. Many areas have gained some autonomy, especially over finances, and when the economic crisis paralysed Russia's banking system in August, Mr Ilyumzhinov refused to pay \$200 million (£120 million) in taxes and set about printing money. Moscow retaliated by suspending credits to Kalmykia and shutting the central bank's local branch.

President Yeltsin has instructed Nikolai Bordyuzha, the Security Council Secretary, to hold an emergency meeting to review the constitutional issues.

Kalmykia is a sparsely populated expanse of steppe on the western shore of the Caspian Sea, recently the host of the 33rd International Chess Olympiad, held in a barely completed Chess City built for the occasion. Although Mr Ilyumzhinov is a billionaire, the republic is extremely poor.

□ Riga: Latvia, the former Soviet republic, yesterday celebrated the 80th anniversary of its earlier brief proclamation of independence against a background of continuing sensitivity over the 40 years of Soviet occupation and controversy about the Baltic state's treatment of its Russian minority.

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Mugabe seizes property of 841 white farmers

FROM JAN RAATHI IN HARARE

PRESIDENT MUGABE of Zimbabwe has issued orders for the immediate seizure of 841 white-owned farms, covering 5.5 million acres. Copies of an "acquisition of land" order began arriving in farmers' postboxes yesterday.

The land becomes the property of the Government as soon as the farmer receives the notice. Nick Swanepoel, president of the Commercial Farmers' Union, said he had been told by the Ministry of Agriculture yesterday how many farms were being taken, but said they would not name the properties. He had been given no other information. The decision has been taken by a Government that is being bankrupted by a war in the Congo and which has more than enough land for its plan to resettle black peasants. It contradicts every assurance given by Mr Mugabe to farmers and Western governments that his land redistribution programme would be fair and transparent. It is seen as the most bizarre of a series of reckless decisions by Mr Mugabe in the past year.

The confiscation orders began arriving as Zimbabwe was paralysed by a one-day na-

donal strike — the second in eight days — called by the labour movement to press its demands for a 20 per cent across-the-board wage increase, a cut in a 70 per cent fuel price increase last month and for negotiations on economic reforms. There is also fear that the orders may aggravate a wave of lawlessness on white-owned farms where hundreds of militant veterans of Zimbabwe's independence war, many of them armed, have mounted a campaign of harassment to drive off the owners. It is also expected to inflict severe damage on the economy and on the currency, which has fallen 85 per cent in the past year.

Farm union sources said that the International Monetary Fund had responded to the news by saying that a \$55 million (£34.5 million) loan under consideration had been killed "stone dead". "There is a real danger of irreparable harm being done by this," a Western diplomat said. "This is the typical approach. As soon as things start getting all pear-shaped, we get back to the land and bash the white farmers."

Mr Swanepoel said he would be seeking a meeting

with Mr Mugabe. "I am shocked," he said. "This is not what I believed would happen after the co-operation between ourselves and the Ministry of Agriculture."

The orders were signed by Kumbirai Kangai, the Minister of Agriculture, last Friday. Immediately afterwards he left on a three-week foreign trip. There can be little doubt, however, that the decision was Mr Mugabe's. Under Zimbabwe's land laws, the Government has 60 days in which to have the orders confirmed by a court, and the farmers have to be paid full compensation for their farms a week after that. If any of these steps is omitted, the property reverts to the farmer. The Government started to seize 1,471 farms last year, but appeared to change its mind after donor-nation pressure.



Jürgen Kremb, a reporter for the German magazine Der Spiegel, in his almost empty Beijing flat yesterday after being ordered to leave China within 48 hours (James Pringle writes). The state security police accused

China expels journalist

him of illegally obtaining government secrets. Herr Kremb had just returned from Singapore, where he is now based, to cover a jazz festival. He said eight officials came into his office, manhandled him, and told him he had to leave the country and could not return for five

years. He is the second reporter expelled in two months. The other was a Japanese accused of obtaining state secrets. The German Foreign Ministry said the expulsion was "disproportionate and unacceptable".

years. He is the second reporter expelled in two months. The other was a Japanese accused of obtaining state secrets. The German Foreign Ministry said the expulsion was "disproportionate and unacceptable".

Beijing brothel madam to be shot

FROM JAMES PRINGLE IN BEIJING

THE madam of a Beijing brothel has been sentenced to death, and may already have been shot, for procuring girls for prostitution, China's main newspapers said yesterday.

But whether the sentence on Ma Yulan, 41, signalled a crackdown on prostitution, which has spread in China in the past year or two as HIV levels have also soared, or whether the madam had crossed some senior figure, is a matter of conjecture.

Eight other defendants, probably young prostitutes, were sentenced to between 18 months and eight years in jail on Tuesday. The court heard that Ma had arranged and hosted prostitution while running a restaurant and bathhouse, and at the health club of the hotel she partly owned.

The case is baffling because the Public Security Bureau and the People's Liberation Army and firms affiliated with them have interests in many prostitution front businesses.

NEWS IN BRIEF

5m cars 'at risk from lead ban'

More than five million cars in Britain could be at risk from a ban on leaded petrol that is expected to be introduced in January 2000. The Motor Industry Federation said a seminar that it had organised indicated that the ban would be introduced in 1999. The seminar was held in London and was attended by representatives of the Government, the Motor Industry Federation and the Automobile Association. The seminar was held in London and was attended by representatives of the Government, the Motor Industry Federation and the Automobile Association.

Killer wasps

Wasp stings caused a fatal allergic reaction in a farmer in Lincolnshire. The farmer, who was 60, died after being stung by a wasp on his arm. The wasp was identified as a common wasp. The farmer had a severe allergic reaction to the sting. He was taken to hospital where he died. The coroner ruled that the death was due to an allergic reaction to a wasp sting.

Shadow cleared

Shadow cleared from the stadium. The stadium was cleared of all debris and is now ready for use. The stadium was cleared of all debris and is now ready for use. The stadium was cleared of all debris and is now ready for use.

Actor's mistress sues his daughter

FROM RICHARD OWEN IN ROME



Mastroianni: his final film led to controversy

NEARLY two years after the death of the Italian film actor Marcello Mastroianni, the feuding women in his life are to face each other today in a Bologna court in a libel case arising from his last film.

Mastroianni, the archetypal Latin lover both on screen and in real life, died in Paris in December 1996, mourned by Flora Carabella, his long-suffering wife; but also by a host of other women, including the French actress Catherine Deneuve, with whom he had a long relationship, the American actress Faye Dunaway, Sophia Loren, with whom he made several films, and Anna Maria Tato, a film producer who was his last companion. Signora Tato has long been at odds with Chiara Mastroianni, the actor's daughter

by Catherine Deneuve, and Barbara, his daughter by his wife Flora.

Yesterday Signora Tato said that she had no choice but to sue Chiara for libel over remarks she made in print last year about *I Remember, Yes I Remember*, a film made by Signora Tato in which the dying Mastroianni reminisces about his life.

Chiara said she stood by an interview she gave *Il Resto di Carlino*, the Bologna newspaper, in which she made accusations against Signora Tato. Signora Tato told *La Stampa*: "I am above all suspicion."

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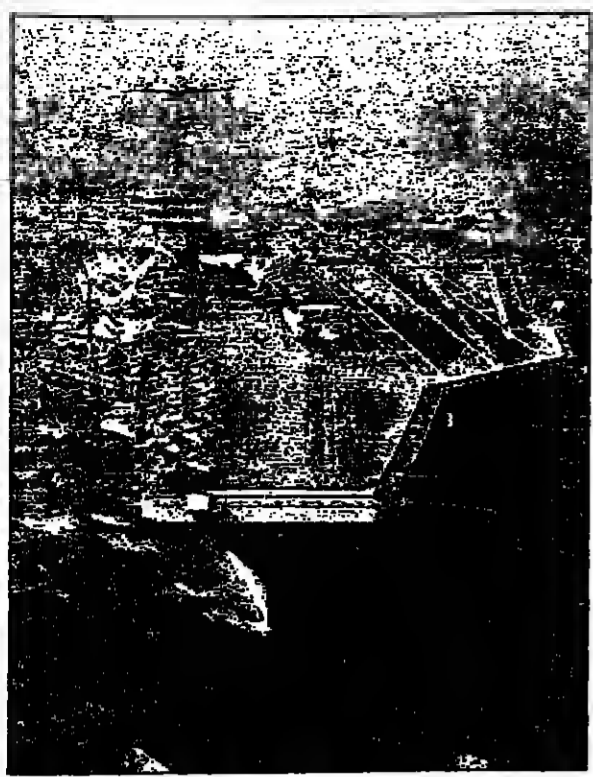
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How US leviathan signalled deadly warning to Saddam

Anthony Loyd looks at the array of 'toys' in the Gulf on the USS Eisenhower



The USS Eisenhower on Iraq duty in the Gulf

World of burgers and brute force

AMERICANS call it 95,000 tons of diplomacy, and if the weapons of the USS Eisenhower were not bad enough to present a threat, then the warship's details are certainly big enough to do so (Anthony Loyd writes).

Powered by two nuclear reactors that could keep the ship moving at 30 knots for 18 years without refuelling, it has a flight deck of more than 4.5 acres that can support up to 100 aircraft. Each of the four 21ft screws weighs 22,000lb; each anchor chain link, 365lb.

The 4,700 crew, average age 21, can be supplemented by another 1,500, and are a mixture of young ghetto kids, country boys and older

specialists. For all its technology, it is a place of stinking aviation fuel, dim lighting, noise and intense physical labour that has many crew snatching sleep whenever they can.

It has television and radio stations as well as a website, firestations, hospital, post office and weather bureau. The laundry tackles more than 6,000lb of washing a day; the bakery makes more than 700 loaves. It carries provisions to sustain its crew for more than three months.

Alcohol is forbidden. Although cooks make nearly 3,000 hamburgers a day, cola consumption and chosen brand are undisclosed.



Crew on the aircraft carrier clean an F18 fighter

IN A strange and silent world of perpetual glowing orange light lies a hint, weighing more than 4½ million lb, of what awaited Iraq had the American-led operation to bomb not been called off minutes before execution. It is the massed array of high-tech explosive ordinance stored in the 50 magazines of the aircraft carrier USS Eisenhower, itself a war machine the size of the Empire State Building.

Sparrow, Sidewinder, Amraam, Maverick, Harm and Hellfire: the so-called 'toys' have names ranging from the banal to the demonic. Secrecy surrounds some of the newer systems, such as the JSOW, the Joint Stand-Off Weapon, a gliding free-fall bomb whose capabilities are not up for discussion. What is clear though, from seeing the magazine and speaking to the ship's pilots and crew, is that had bombing begun as planned, the operation would not merely have curtailed Iraq's ability to make weapons of mass destruction, but shattered the infrastructure of the Baath party regime sustaining President Saddam Hussein.

"In 91 most of what we dropped on Iraq was 'dumb' technology," said a veteran officer of the Desert Storm campaign. "It was like throwing the whole kitchen sink at Saddam. What we have now is very different: show-case laser-guided weaponry developed over the last seven years with which, if allowed, we could have had a massive impact without even building up serious force levels in the Gulf."

The graffiti was already on the missiles, the missiles on the jets, and the pilots in the cockpits when the operation was called off. So "Spread'em Saddam" and similar optimistic welcomes had to be wiped off and most of the ordinance restored by the specialist crew, the "mag rats", working 120ft below deck.

However hard the US 5th Fleet tries to spread the word that it succeeded in forcing Iraq's hand by the projection rather than implementation of force, the sense of anticlimax for many on the Eisenhower is bitter.

"I was manning my jet, I was ready to go," said a 26-year-old FA18 Hornet pilot, after waiting for "the E ticket ride", the moment his plane



An Eisenhower crewman chalks a message to Saddam on a bomb; below, the carrier's combat direction centre monitors the battle group

screamed off the runway. "We had spent days and nights before this working on our targets. Saddam will only respond to what he knows — violence. I believed in what we were doing and was pumped on adrenaline. Then the captain said, 'Ship the operation 24 hours', and now I'm falling down the backside of that."

Not everyone shares such sentiments. A few veteran aircrew of combat missions against the Iraqis in 1991, particularly those who are married, even voiced feelings of relief. "I didn't want to die" was a difficult statement to argue with.

"I like to stay away from the word disappointment," said Captain Denby Starling II, the Eisenhower's commanding officer, of the operation's abortion. "I can't say I'm disappointed that we didn't launch aviators off this ship into harm's way."

Even so, he must have felt frustration. Four and a half months into a six-month deployment, the time in which a ship's crew is considered to be at its most efficient, it is the second time the Eisenhower has been de-



prived of action on the brink of an impending operation. In the Mediterranean last month, the ship was within 48 hours of launching sorties against Serb targets in Kosovo.

The name of the operation to bomb Iraq stays classified as it remains on 72-hour notice. But the essentials of the plan are known. A wave of Toma-

hawk cruise missiles were to be launched by B52 bombers as well as from ships in the Eisenhower's battle group, targeting air defence locations as well as larger-scale targets.

Then, E2 Hawkeyes, the naval equivalent of Awaacs, were to be launched, using their huge circular radars to provide early warning of

Iraqi movements as well as to command and control the subsequent waves of aircraft.

EA6B Prowlers would follow up, each capable of closing down a city's communications, to jam Iraqi radar and electronic data links. Once these were in position, the strike aircraft, FA18 Hornets, would take off to destroy remaining air defences before moving on to specified targets while F14 Tomcats covered them, disposing of any airborne threat.

The plan will soon slip out of the hands of the Eisenhower and into those of the USS Enterprise, already en route to take over command of its battle group of lesser craft.

Few doubt that the crisis will re-emerge soon. "It'll be the Enterprise's good fortune if they get the chance to execute it," said Captain Bud Jewett, commander of the Eisenhower's air wing.

"Someone's going to do it over the next two months. We were ready to do it, and we had all the toys and equipment to make it happen. You can only cry wolf so many times."

Baghdad enemies to rally in London

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NOVEMBER 19 1998
Sex-change prosecutor settles her legal battle

By FRANCES GIBB
LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
A Crown prosecutor who was forced to change her name to have a sex change settled her legal battle with the Crown Prosecution Service on Monday.

enged on
community

Baghdad's enemies to rally in London

By MICHAEL BINYON, DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

BRITAIN is to call a meeting of 15 Iraqi opposition groups next week to urge them to settle their differences and to spell out what support the West will give them in their efforts to overthrow President Saddam Hussein.

But officials made it clear yesterday that Britain would not offer them money or weapons, and was not proposing any timetable of intervention to topple the Iraqi leader.

The squabbling leaders will be invited to meet Derek Fatchett, the Foreign Office minister responsible for the Middle East, in London on Monday. The initiative follows calls by Tony Blair and Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, for the overthrow of Saddam and an assertion by the Prime Minister in *The New York Times* yesterday that there was growing opposition to Saddam in Iraq.

Mr Blair gave no evidence for his assessment, saying it was something Britain would discuss with America. He was also cautious about not raising false hopes: "We are not issuing promises here that we can't keep."

Officials could offer little evidence of any new wave of opposition to Saddam. But they pointed to three areas where disaffection was continuing to draw a harsh response from the Iraqi authorities.

In the north, a recent agreement between the two main Kurdish political groups had formed a strengthened front against Baghdad; in the south, there was a continuing insurgency in Basra; and the recent hanging of two Shia Muslims underlined Saddam's fear of religious-based opposition.

London is the main centre of Iraqi exiles and opposition groups. But they have become increasingly fractious and disillusioned, and are cynical about Western promises of help. At least three times since the Gulf War, the Iraqi opposition has been encouraged to rise up against Saddam, but the West has never provided money or military support.

The groups to be invited to Monday's meeting underline the fragmentation of the opposition, and their mutual suspicion. Their various titles — the Iraqi National Congress, the Iraqi Democratic Party, the Islamic Movement in Iraq, the Kurdistan National Congress, the Assyrian Democratic Movement, the Islamic Accord Party, the Iraqi National Record and the Turkoman National Democratic Movement — indicate the factional and ill-defined aims of many groups.

The dissidents include Muslim fundamentalists, Baathists, pro-Syrians, pro-Iranians, communists, monarchists, liberals, democrats and secularists. They are divided ethnically and religiously: Kurds, Shias, Sunnis, Syrian Christians and Turkomans. They all have very different views of how Iraq should be ruled after Saddam.

Diplomats tend to dismiss these exiles because they have little influence over events in Iraq, and some are thought to be compromised either by infiltration by Saddam's agents or by covert association with the regime.

The main group, the Iraqi National Congress, was formed in 1992 to combine more than 30 opposition groups, and was led by Ahmad Chalabi, former manager of the collapsed Petra Bank of Jordan. It created a 174-member national assembly, an executive body and a presidential council. But Mr Chalabi was unable to shake off talk about earlier involvement in financial scandal.

America has promised some \$100 million (£62 million) to help Iraqi opposition groups.



The heroism of Davy Crockett and his friends was depicted by John Wayne, right, who starred in *The Alamo*

Diary that dents Alamo legend goes on sale

FROM GILES WHITTELL IN WASHINGTON

THE King of the Wild Frontier returned from beyond the grave to haunt American imaginations yesterday when a dog-eared diary purporting to tell the story of Davy Crockett's final moments at the Alamo went on the auction block. This hinge of Texan history remains so controversial that it was expected to fetch up to

half a million dollars. According to legend, Colonel Davy Crockett, of the "coonskin cap, died heroically in San Antonio in 1836, swinging his rifle until Mexican troops slaughtered him among the last half-dozen defenders.

Yet the diary of José Enrique de la Peña, a Mexican officer, claims that far from fighting to the death, the Texan and his comrades were taken prisoner and executed. It consists of two hand-

written sheaves bound with ragged ribbons. For more than 20 years it has been rejected by Texan loyalists as heresy. As intense interest drove up the auctioneer's estimate yesterday, it was condemned, not for the first time, as a forgery.

First published in Mexico City in 1955, it is one of the most complete and valuable accounts of General Antonio de Santa Anna's march north to suppress General Sam Houston's rebel army.

Starr rehearses for grilling

FROM DAMIAN WHITWORTH IN WASHINGTON



Starr: "pattern of White House obstruction"

PRESIDENT Clinton's tormentor becomes the tormentor today as impeachment hearings open with Kenneth Starr, the independent prosecutor, being grilled by Democrats and a White House lawyer looking for vengeance.

With the tables turned, Mr Starr has been rehearsing his testimony and answers to an expected barrage of exorbitant questions, just as Mr Clinton spent hours preparing for his videotaped appearance in front of Mr Starr.

Republicans still eager to see Mr Clinton impeached hope Mr Starr can turn in a command performance that will stem haemorrhaging pub-

lic support for their cause. But if the hugely unpopular prosecutor fails to convince Americans of the validity of his investigation, it will only increase the clamour for the inquiry to be wrapped up.

While Mr Clinton's evidence was relayed by closed-circuit television to the grand jury from the White House — and released later on tape — Mr Starr's appearance before the House of Representatives' Judiciary Committee will be televised live. It is being heavily billed by the networks as a critical moment in the Monica Lewinsky scandal.

Polls show that about two thirds of Americans view his

investigation negatively, but Mr Starr maintains that he is not looking for personal approval. "He does not seek vindication for himself. But he does seek vindication of the facts and the rule of law," said his spokesman, Charles Bakaly. "People who lie and perjure themselves have been able to get away with it by complaining about prosecutors and portraying prosecutors as villains. We believe we have been the victim of a co-ordinated effort to stonewall and destroy our prosecutorial authority."

Mr Starr is expected to outline a pattern of White House obstruction extending beyond the Lewinsky affair.

WORLD IN BRIEF

Israelis prepare for withdrawal

Jerusalem: Israel began fortifying several Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank in preparation for the handover of more territory to Palestinian control under the terms of last month's peace agreement at Wye Plantation in the United States (Christopher Walker writes). Israel television showed soldiers constructing cement trenches around a settlement south of Bethlehem which is expected to border Palestinian-controlled land after the next withdrawal.

Provided an Israeli Cabinet meeting scheduled for today approves measures by Yassir Arafat, the Palestinian leader, to meet his obligations under the deal, Palestinian officials said the first stage of the pullout could begin as early as tomorrow.

Freed killer executed

Huntsville: A murderer thought to be the only person to be freed from death row and then to return after killing again was executed by injection for the 1992 abduction, rape and murder of a young woman. Kenneth Allen McDuff, 52, is suspected of killing as many as 14 people here in Texas. McDuff went to death row in 1968 for shooting two teenage boys and raping and strangling a female friend. 16. (AP)

Singer on the move

Washington: Seven months after being caught in a "lewd act" in a public lavatory in Beverly Hills, George Michael is due to return to California to perform two weeks of community service as part of his sentence (Giles Whinell writes). The pop singer is expected to spend his time travelling around Los Angeles in a van to help to deliver meals to Aids patients for a local charity.

Gingrich successor

Washington: Republicans unanimously endorsed Bob Livingston, right, to succeed Newt Gingrich, who quit as Speaker of the House of Representatives after elections in which the party's majority over the Democrats shrank from 11 seats to six (Ian Brodie writes). Mr Livingston is seen as a conciliatory figure. Jennifer Dunn, who campaigned to be the first woman House Majority Leader, the number two position, was defeated by Dick Armey.



Boesak accuser lied

Cape Town: The principal witness behind charges that Allan Boesak, the popular South African anti-apartheid cleric, was guilty of fraud and theft withdrew several of his claims in the High Court. Freddie Steenkamp, Mr Boesak's former book-keeper, himself jailed for stealing from the churchman's Foundation for Peace and Justice, admitted that he had implicated his boss to cover up his own theft. (AFP)

Wedding day bonus

Bangkok: A northern Thailand police chief has stopped a hill-tribe bride from jumping from a tower to her death by promising to pay for her wedding, the police said. Lan Zahyo, 18, had said she would jump from the tower after her fiancé told her that he was too poor to provide a dowry and to pay for their planned wedding. (Reuters)

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The case against cannabis



Dr Thomas Stuttaford reports on marijuana; Harley Street; a flesh-eating bug; Huntington's disease; and the effects of the Spanish diet on longevity

In 1839, W. B. O'Shaughnessy, a professor of medicine at the University of Calcutta, introduced cannabis into Western medicine. For the past 160 years, until recently, it has been doctors rather than schoolmasters who have had the greater professional interest in the drug. Mixtures derived from cannabis were regularly prescribed until the 1930s and 1940s for a variety of ills. Queen Victoria and her doctor were firm advocates of a cannabis tincture to treat her period pains.

This week Estelle Morris, the School Standards Minister, took the discussion away from a world of white coats to one of mortar boards. In fact, her remarks were not too revolutionary. She was not advocating any laxity in the approach to the misuse of cannabis, merely more flexibility in the punishment system.

Increased acceptance of the medicinal benefits of cannabis, taken in the form of cannabinoid extracts, has tended to obscure the adverse reactions of cannabis smoking. A few years ago, vogueish doctors were apt to overrule parental and even educational anxieties and encouraged the cannabis-smoking young person to con-



Spelling out the risks: some doctors advocate the medicinal use of cannabis but it can carry a number of serious ill-effects

tinue. They explained that they could see little difference between the parent having a gin and tonic or half a bottle of wine with dinner and the teenager puffing a joint.

Professor Wayne Hall, in association with Dr Nadia Solowij from the University of New South Wales, has recently reviewed the less desirable effects of cannabis in *The Lancet*.

Most cannabis users stop in their mid to late twenties; few smoke it for more than a few years. In the US and Australia only 10 per cent become daily users of cannabis, although 20 to 30 per cent use the drug weekly. Daily cannabis smokers are more likely to be men,

and tend to be less well educated. They also take tobacco and alcohol regularly as well as a wide variety of other drugs.

Cannabis may induce anxiety and panic in those unused to it. It reduces concentration, impairs memory and muscular co-ordination in the long and short term. This is the price that has to be paid for the euphoria and the intensification of ordinary sensory experiences. The effects on memory and concentration of persistent cannabis use are very subtle. It is not known whether they are reversible after prolonged abstinence but, say the authors, they do create a cannabis-dependent syndrome so that regular users find it ex-

remely difficult to give it up. The acute ill-effects include a liability to accidents, particularly when, as is often the case, the cannabis is combined with other drugs or alcohol.

The capacity of cannabis to increase the risk of psychotic symptoms should, in many doctors' opinion, be enough to discourage its use. It is unlikely that cannabis smoking may "cause" an acute psychotic breakdown but the overwhelming evidence is that it can induce this in those who, because of their lifestyle or their heredity, will be prone to schizophrenia and its related conditions. The temperament

and interests of those who may be in danger of developing mental illness may also draw them to cannabis smoking circles. The continued use of cannabis may not be as obviously mentally destructive as that caused by long-term excessive drinking but the longer the patient has been smoking pot, the greater the impairment. This damage not only affects the person's overall intellectual ability but the subtler aspects of reasoning and decision-making.

Cannabis smokers should realise the physical diseases induced by smoking. They develop chronic bronchitis, just as tobacco smokers do, and their lungs show the changes

that are precursors of malignant disease. There may be an increased risk of cancers of the mouth, pharynx and gullet, and there is evidence that leukaemia is more common among babies born to mothers who smoke cannabis when pregnant.

Professor Hall and Dr Solowij are adamant that those who should avoid cannabis are disturbed adolescents with poor school performance, people with a family history of schizophrenia and its related diseases, patients with asthma, bronchitis, emphysema, those who have already shown a tendency to over-indulge in alcohol or other drugs and, of course, pregnant women.

Cashing in at Harley St

HARLEY STREET, built in the 1750s, is named after Edward Harley, the 2nd Earl of Oxford. While sometimes dubbed a philanthropist, he is better known as a bibliophile and collector.

The area became the home and workplace of doctors in the 19th century; by the turn of the century 157 were practising in the district. Specialists tended to congregate in Harley Street and smart GPs in Devonshire Place and other neighbouring streets. There are now 1,400 doctors and dentists practising there, and 3,000 ancillary workers.

It is also the home of eight internationally famous private hospitals. Whether Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother has slipped in the stableyard at Sandringham or General Pinochet has slipped a disc in Santiago, they, like many of the world's rich and powerful, go to Harley Street.

In the London Clinic, for instance, some of the latest gadgetry in the neurosurgical unit includes an optical tracking system, not one designed to direct cruise missiles but the healing knife of a neurosurgeon. The system can also fuse CT scan and MRI images so that the surgeon can, by using virtual reality, pre-plan an operation so as to assess its outcome. In the operating theatre the surgeon is guided by computer along the best route to the diseased area with an accuracy of not less than 2mm.

If Edward Harley were to visit the present tenants, he would be bemused by the advanced state of medical science and technology. How would he, as a philanthropist, judge the street's doctors? Is their practice of medicine motivated by the highest standards of care, or have they a keener eye to the health of their accounts at Coutts Bank in Cavendish Square? Doctors working in the area have rapid access to colleagues recognised around the globe as experts of some particular discipline. Bedside conferences are relatively easy to arrange. I recently saw five consultants at a patient's bedside in the same day. It is reckoned that Har-

ley Street doctors together earn £138 million and that the hospitals have a revenue of £300 million. There are also other private hospitals within easy walking distance that earn a further £60 million, as well as independent laboratories and smaller quasi-medical centres.

Although Edward Harley's heart would have leapt at the great, albeit expensive, medicine being practised at the likes of Princess Grace Hospital or King Edward VII's Hospital, he would have been cast down by the abuse that is inevitable in any industry of this size.

Almost weekly there are



High-tech: Harley Street

stories of disgrace, disaster, subterfuge and downright crookedness perpetrated in the area. In any group of nearly 5,000 ambitious people, there will be those whose greed is greater than their competence or honesty. Recently the landlords, the Howard de Walden Estate, with the ready co-operation of local doctors, formed a Harley Street Bureau. Not everyone, even all the doctors, are aware of the expertise available.

Now overseas and UK corporations, embassies, trade missions, hotels — as well as individuals and their doctors — will be able to use the bureau as an independent point of contact when seeking what, and whom, Harley Street has to offer. It will not offer medical advice, but aims to encourage the best traditions of the area.



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Child victims you can help

IF, in the 18th century, Edward Harley had dragged himself away from his library and the fashionable West End to the mean streets beyond, he would have come across the pitiable sight of cancrum oris. Often known by its African name of noma, it is a singularly devastating disease that affects the mouth and face of children: a facial form of necrotising fasciitis, the infected "flesh-eating" condition often in the headlines.

Cancrum oris has not been much in evidence in the United Kingdom since the social chaos caused by the First World War. It afflicts children who are undernourished — in particular, those lacking protein — and is often precipitated by measles or other debilitating conditions. It is still occasionally seen in British children who have leukaemia. The cause is a mixture of aerobic and anaerobic organisms that destroy subcutaneous tissue.

Referring to it as noma is appropriate because the disease is still rampant in parts of Africa, where, in most cases, the child dies; the rest are left seriously disfigured. Those who do survive often become social outcasts. A British organisation, Facing Africa (01380-828 533), is co-operating with similar European initiatives to treat the 100,000 African victims aged under six.

Spaniards raise a glass to long life

IN 1900 a baby born in Spain could expect to live for 35 years. By 1950 its average life expectancy was 62. In 1985 the figure for a female was 70 and 73 for a male. This year the lifespan is likely to be 81.1 and 78.2 years respectively.

Within 50 years, the average Spanish man will live to be 80, and woman to 85. Even during just the past nine years, Spaniards have enjoyed greater longevity, once the road accident rate and deaths associated with drug abuse began to fall. They now have the highest life expectancy in the European Union, and worldwide are second only to Japan.

The *Lancet* has been looking into the reasons why Spaniards are likely to hit their pension funds harder than all their European neighbours. Ramon Segura, of the Uni-



Healthy option: olives

versity of Barcelona, attributes some of this longevity to genetic factors, but he also commends the diet and lifestyle. Spaniards spend much of their time out of doors and relish the antioxidant-rich Mediterranean diet: olives, vegetables, fruit, fish, bread and, of course, wine.

Spain's sun and food both form part of what its people refer to as "mental hygiene", an approach to everyday stresses that aims to minimise an adverse response to tension — a way, perhaps, of coping with the population's mercurial temperaments.

Highlighting Huntington's

THIS IS Huntington's Disease Awareness Week, and today those most involved in its care are meeting in London to discuss recent research. Lady Harewood, the patron of the Huntington's Disease Association, is hosting the occasion.

The disease is especially prevalent in Norfolk and few who have practised there are unaware of its effects. Each child born of a parent with Huntington's has a 50-50 chance of inheriting it, but the age at which it starts varies between 30 and 50. It causes destruction of the nerve cells in two parts of the brain, the basal ganglia, involved in movement, and the higher centres of the cortex, which control the mind and temperament. The patient gradually suffers physical, emotional and intellectual disability.

THE SUNDAY TIMES

OZONE LAYERS

Check out Chanel's new cruisewear — photographed for The Sunday Times Style by its designer, Karl Lagerfeld, who also reveals his thoughts on fashion, pictures . . . and bad breath. This Sunday

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"The evolution of Hillary Clinton as stylish First Lady is complete — at long last she seems to have settled comfortably and unapologetically into a style that suits her"

The sexiest woman alive?

Next week Hillary Clinton will realise the dream of thousands of twenty-something models by appearing on the cover of American Vogue. Not bad for a once-behemoth feminist who recently turned 51. But it comes not a moment too soon: to judge by a swelling chorus of Hillarymania, her new role as cover girl is merely belated proof of her transformation — no snorting — into one of the most revered and glamorous First Ladies ever.

American Vogue has put the official stamp on massive grassroots support for Hillary Clinton. Giles Whittell reports

Conclusion: "Hillary's my dream girl." Joe "D" is more poetic. Hillary "has matured as a First Lady better than a fine wine in both her demeanour, and, in my opinion, her looks," he says. To make the point he leads on to his website a memory-eating slide show of Mrs C in dozens of guises, from Arkansas librarian to Sharon Stone lookalike in dark evening gown, gold earrings and upswept hair. The montage is entitled "Mighty Morphing Hillary".



Catching up: Hillary in American Vogue

aimed, ultimately, at putting Hillary in the Oval Office. There are many similar websites: the Hillary 2000 Committee, the Hillary for President Council, even Republicans for Hillary. All will be disappointed in the end, because she is unlikely ever to be President. But in the meantime they are cheering on her arrival as a fashion icon with the excitement of punters watching their horse make a late run from behind.

For this Mrs Clinton has to thank, partly, a national surge of admiration for her fortitude during Lewinskygate. She has also had good fashion advice lately, good enough for The Washington Post to declare on Monday that "the evolution of Mrs Clinton as stylish First Lady is complete... It has taken six years of evolving hair-styles, a flying-saucer hat and countless unflattering suits, but at long last she seems to have settled comfortably and unapologetically into a style that suits her".

When friends do business, sooner or later one of them will have to choose between the friendship and the money. Usually, the money wins. Remember the friendship of the novelists Martin Amis and Julian Barnes? Barnes's wife was Amis's agent. When Amis left her stable, he ended with much more money but one fewer friend.

Your best friend is probably your worst partner

The warmest friendships founder over money, says Celia Brayfield

We know mixing business and friendship is dangerous — but we all do it. The news that two of America's most famous families — the Kennedys and the Streisands — have fallen out over a property partnership between the late Jacqueline Kennedy and Barbara Streisand's brother Sheldon is yet another cautionary tale.

I've done business with friends myself, though never as disastrously as the herb farmers and usually with success. One thing I learnt very early was to protect my friendships by making sure our deals were done by the book from the beginning.



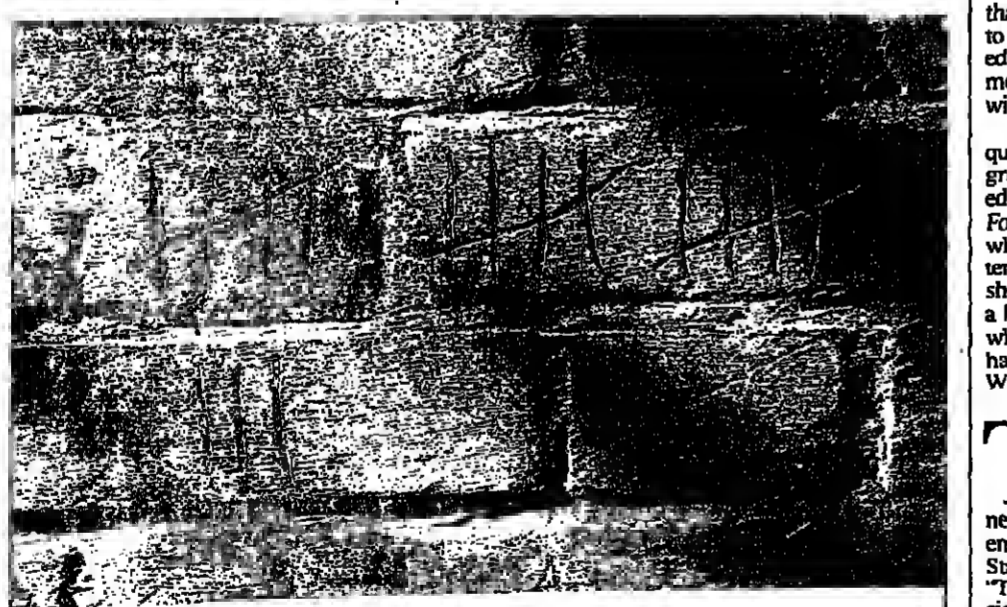
A deal too far: Martin Amis

As ever, Jacqueline Kennedy was ahead of her time. Doing business with friends — and facing their betrayal — has become the condition of our age. Take the example of a couple I knew who bought a small farm jointly with a friend. It seemed an idyllic deal when they shook hands on it — no contracts, of course; if you can't trust your friends, who can you trust?

The friend bought the farmhouse, which the couple couldn't afford, and rented half of it to them, while reserving half for his blissful weekends in the country. The couple bought the surrounding land, restored the house and started a business growing medicinal herbs.

have friendly enterprises instead of family businesses, and there is a lot to be said for this civilised development. Blood is not necessarily thicker than water — look at the Sophoclean tragedy of the Gucci ex-wife convicted of hiring hitmen to murder her former husband.

In politics, it seems preferable for ministers to employ intelligent, hard working "cronies" who understand their policies instead of the idle, halfwit cousins dragged into government by the politicians of the 19th century.



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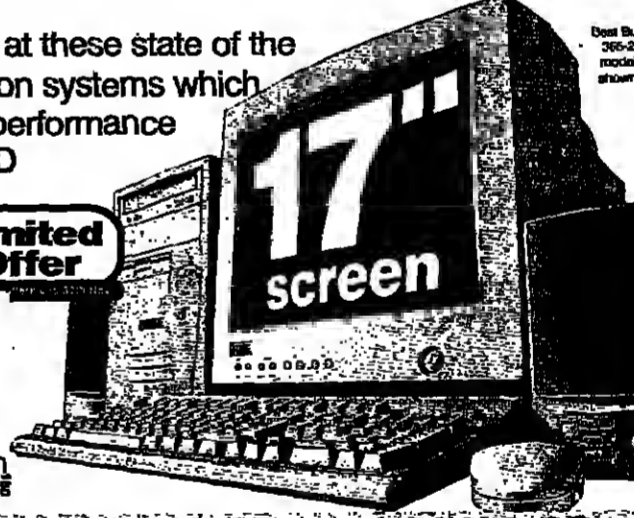
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Taylor's office on the north side of San Francisco Bay is ground zero for the new paranoid Left that has emerged in response to the Starr report's alleged excesses. "This forum has been designed to protect your messages from Kenneth Starr," her home page states. But it has the good sense to accept contributions from anyone, including "Zippy the Wonder Slug", a dihard Hillary-phobe who once joined in the attacks on the First Lady's "piano legs", but reversed his position on seeing the photograph of her dancing on a beach with the President last year. "You know what? Zippy muted." She has a Taylor's ass.

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OBITUARIES

JACQUES MEDECIN

Jacques Médecin, Mayor of Nice, 1965-90, died in Uruguay on November 17 aged 70. He was born in Nice on May 5, 1928.



Jacques Médecin with his wife Ilene, right, and two friends on the town in Nice, 1990: shortly afterwards he resigned as mayor and fled to Uruguay

Debonair, dynamic and corrupt, Jacques Médecin was the most scandalous French mayor of modern times, yet also in some ways one of the best. He took on a torpid, decaying resort city, living on his past, and through bold investment projects and skilful management he turned it into a booming, youthful business-cum-tourist metropolis, again the queen of the Riviera. For this he was idolised locally, and the Government even made him junior minister for tourism in 1976-78.

But he piled up huge municipal debts. And when the tax and judicial authorities unearthed a bizarre morass of financial misdealings, in 1990 Médecin suddenly resigned and fled to Uruguay. He was convicted in absentia and sentenced to a year in prison, for misuse of 13 million francs of public funds. Then finally he was extradited back to France in November 1994, to face trial on charges of massive fraud, bribe-taking and tax evasion.

Médecin's career spotlighted a weakness in French local government. Though in many ways centralised, the French system does allow a great deal of power to a city mayor, who can become a potent local autocrat. Many of them work wonders for their cities. But they can also work wonders while abusing the system, and for a long time getting away with it unchecked.

The Médecin phenomenon

also said a lot about the mentality and mores of Europe's largest coastal resort. "In France," it is said, "there's Paris, there's the provinces — and there's Nice," so very Italian, a kind of city-state that Médecin ruled as a private fief where the writ of Paris scarcely ran. "Le Grand Jaquou" was a true Nîçois, flamboyant, outspoken, charismatic, with a young blonde American wife and a fast, glamorous life-style.

He ran the city through the notorious système Médecin, a tight network of patronage and cronyism that extended also through all the Alpes-

Mariannes department, of whose council he became president. This system was not unusual in a Mediterranean town. But Médecin was also openly friendly, at one time, with some of the local high-class gangsters. Yet he remained popular, handsomely re-elected four times.

Those were boom French years, and Médecin set about revitalising the city. He and his team built Akropolis, a lavish business centre; they enlarged the airport, making it the busiest outside Paris; they cleared up beach pollution, created urban expressways, renovated the lovely Vieille Ville and the Place

Masséna, rebuilt the opera house, founded the Musée Chagall poured money into culture. Médecin encouraged new industries and high-rise properties, scarring the landscape of the lower Var plain. But his policies did bring younger, active people to a town of retired pensioners, as well as that vital commodity, all-year business and convention tourism. Nice also became extremely clean and tidy.

But it still kept its powerful Mafia-like criminal milieu, and although Médecin was not a part of it, he felt the need to have links with it. In the

1970s his friends included Albert Spaggiari, charged with a huge bank robbery, and Dominique Fratoni, implicated in the corruption case of the Ruhl Casino. It was the milieu of which Graham Greene, living at Antibes, wrote in *J'Accuse*: "Avoid the region of Nice — the reserve of some of the most criminal organisations in the South of France." Greene also spoke of "the connivance of high authorities".

For these links, Médecin was dismissed as tourist minister by President Giscard d'Estaing. His party political affiliations were always oddly

erratic, first centrist (UDF), then neo-Gaullist (RPR), though he hated Gaullism. Finally, in the 1980s, when the main parties had rejected him, he began to flirt closely with the National Front, very strong in Nice. Declaring that he shared their views "99.9 per cent", he made anti-Semitic outbursts that angered local Jews, and declared his support for apartheid and for the Pinochet regime in Chile.

The secret of his long success in Nice was his patronage system, based on a web of local associations with some 15,000 members, secretly centered on the Mairie, which gave and received pay-offs. Médecin could thus infiltrate his loyalists into most key positions, and could find the financing for his projects. But in the 1980s the city was piling up huge debts, reaching 600 million francs in some years. The fiscal authorities became suspicious. Médecin himself had managed to pay no income tax since 1980, and it was thought that he had been laundering the city's turnover to enrich himself.

As long as the Right was in power in Paris, investigations were blocked: Jacques Chirac and some others had been friendly with Médecin, and they did not want embarrassing revelations. But when the Socialists returned in 1988, they sent special tax experts to Nice who uncovered much evidence. This involved underhand deals to re-finance the city's debt, and other deals such as selling public lavatories to California, where Médecin had some dubious business interests. (He also acquired an American wife, Ilene, whom he passed off in France as a Max Factor

heir, whereas in fact she was rather poor.) In September 1990, facing a claim for back payment of 20 million francs, plus criminal prosecution for misuse of funds, Médecin resigned, blaming "a plot by the totalitarian Socialist power machine". By a prearranged plan he flew to Uruguay, which had no extradition treaty with France. There at Punta del Este he started a business selling T-shirts, and blithely continued to manipulate Nice politics by remote control, giving interviews to visiting French television reporters. His son-in-law, a travel agent, organised package tours to Uruguay including *trois jours de fête* with Médecin. But the party ended when in 1994 Paris finally persuaded Uruguay's Government to extradite him. He was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison, reduced to two years on appeal.

His "system" in Nice collapsed in confusion. Many Nîçois were by now sickened by him, but others kept a certain nostalgia. According to one opinion poll in 1993, hard to believe, when the cheeky exile threatened to stand for President of France, 86 per cent of Nîçois said they would vote for him.

His strident city patriotism went some way to explain the local cult for this tall moustachioed braggart with the big handshake and breezy southern manner, fond of girls and parties, and an excellent cook (his own book on *la cuisine nîçoise* was a bestseller). Médecin, who returned to Uruguay after serving his sentence in France, is survived by his second wife, Ilene, and the two daughters of his first marriage.

DOUG WRIGHT

Doug Wright, Kent and England bowler, died on November 13 aged 84. He was born on August 21, 1914.

JUST before and after the Second World War Doug Wright was probably the most feared of English bowlers. This is not proclaimed by his record, either for Kent or for England, but on his day he could reduce to impotence the finest batsmen in the world. He was out of the ordinary run of bowlers, being a leg-spinner of almost medium pace, a fact which reduced his control and increased his capacity. Wright possessed a well-disguised googly, and a calm, philosophical temperament with which to ride the misfortunes he encountered.

Born in Sidcup, Douglas Victor Percy Wright had to wait until A. P. Freeman's retirement at the end of the 1936 season before establishing himself with Kent. In 1937, his first full season, he took 107 wickets and the news soon spread that a bowler had emerged who might become a matchwinner for England. Sir Pelham Warner, on watching him at Maidstone in 1939, said that from a distance he had not seen more difficult bowling since the days of S. F. Barnes. And yet to put him on to bowl was always something of a gamble. He was prone to bowl no-balls, and long hops were part of his stock-in-trade.

Wright's first appearance for England was against Australia at Trent Bridge in 1938, a series that set the pattern of his Test career. At Leeds in the fourth Test match he brought visions of a remarkable English victory when Australia were set 107 to win in their



Wright bowling at a Test trial between England and the Rest at Birmingham in 1948

second innings. Coming on at 48 for two he quickly sent back Bradman and McCabe and later had Hassett caught — before Australia got home. In the other Tests he was more

costly and less successful. Wright spent the Second World War in the Army. With the return of peace he was back at once in the England side and for the next ten years

he was Kent's leading wicket-taker. In Australia in 1946-47 he took 23 wickets in the Test matches and the Australians were unanimous in their praise of his bowling.

Yet, as a general rule, Wright's achievements never quite matched his ability. As he was a leg spinner, his slip fielders would stand fairly close to the wicket, and the ball would go flashing past them at catching height. Frequently, too, he would shave the stumps with a leg break or a googly, and have his next ball, a long hop, hit for four. The catches dropped off his bowling were legion.

Bowling, indeed, brought Wright more than his share of frustration and more than his share of success. He did the hat-trick seven times, more than anyone else in the game's history. Ten times he took 100 wickets in a season. In 1954 he became Kent's first professional captain, an appointment he held for three years. For England he took 108 wickets at 39.11 apiece. All told he took 2,056 wickets.

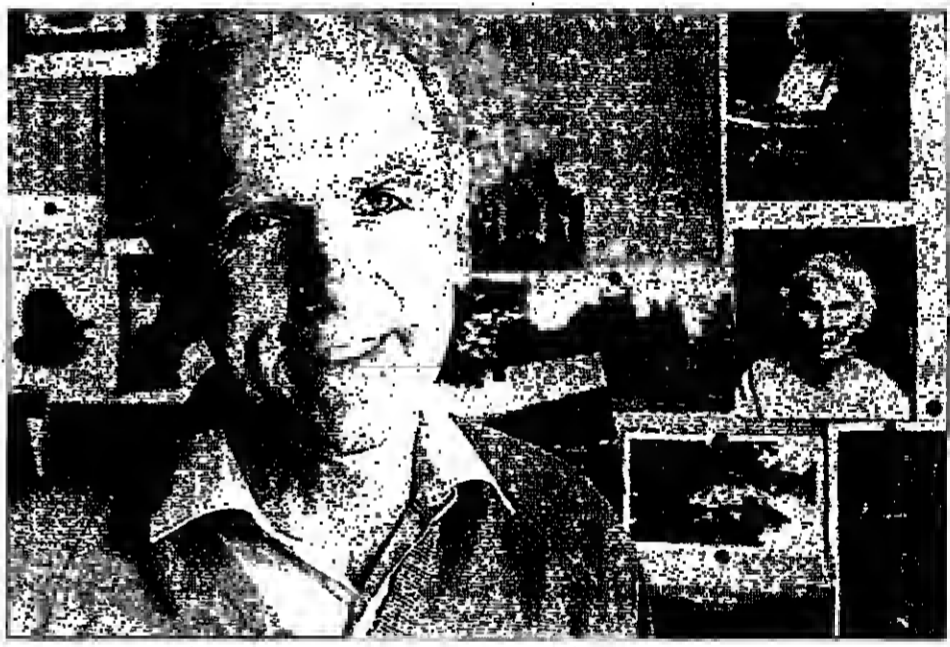
By those who watched him in action he will be remembered for his long, bouncing run. By those who played against him he was known for his gentle nature and his legendary potential. And by all who came into contact with him he was recognised as a model among professional cricketers.

Wright retired after 25 years with his county at the age of 44, and in 1959 he succeeded George Geary as cricket coach at Charterhouse, a job he held until his final retirement in 1971.

His wife Daphne survives him, together with their son and daughter.

PROFESSOR TOM KITWOOD

Professor Tom Kitwood, dementia expert, died from a previously undetected heart defect on November 1 aged 61. He was born on February 16, 1937.



Kitwood: put the person, not the disease, at the centre of dementia care

THE unexpected death of Professor Tom Kitwood, a leader in the understanding of dementia and in the care of those affected by it, came at a wastefully early age. He turned to the subject relatively late, but he brought to it both wisdom and an ability to turn his research insights and those of others into accessible lessons for a wide audience.

However, he lived long enough to see his contribution widely acknowledged in recent weeks: by his appointment to a personal chair of psycho-gerontology at the University of Bradford, and by Age Concern's Book of the Year award for his last book, *Dementia Reconsidered*.

Thomas Marris Kitwood was born in Lincolnshire. The son of a businessman, he was educated at Rugby, where he was a scholar, and at King's College, Cambridge, where in 1960 he took a good degree in natural sciences. He was a committed Christian, and he trained for the ministry at Wycliffe Hall, being ordained in 1962.

From there he went on to teach at Sherborne, where he was priested. At Sherborne he at first propounded Christianity and chemistry in untrodden double harness. But he soon began to ask questions about his Christianity. In particular, he started to explore the insights of humanism, which he brought to much of his later work, and in his first book, *What is Humanism?*, he examined material and religious approaches to the question.

From Sherborne he went to Uganda, to teach at Busoga boys' boarding school in the hills above Lake Victoria. There he met Jenny Cooper, herself the daughter of missionary parents, whom he married in 1969. He also encountered the exciting challenges of a young continent, and, when

Idi Amin took power, its dangers. He was instrumental in rescuing his Ugandan headmaster from Amin's tribal brutality, after which, recognising the impossibility of remaining under Amin's terror, he returned to Britain.

Troubled in his Christianity, Kitwood wanted to broaden his academic interests and to break into the fields of psychology and sociology. He was in his late thirties, but he took his young family to the University of Bradford, where in 1974, after three hard years on a student grant, he took an MSc in the sociology of education, following it with a PhD in social psychology. In the process he substituted a concerned humanism for the Christianity of his youth. (He had already relinquished his Orders.)

Kitwood stayed on at Bradford to lecture on a range of sociological and scientific subjects. Equipped as he was in both natural and social sciences, he was also well placed to pursue his interests in counselling, psychotherapy and depth psychology. But it was almost another decade before he came to the field — dementia — in which he made his name.

In 1985 consultants at the Bradford Health Authority turned to him for academic support and research supervision for their work in this field. He quickly began to create an original approach to the understanding of dementia, which took both neuroscience and social psychology into account.

He also brought a degree of hope, almost of optimism, to the subject. The details of dementia care had hitherto been left largely unexamined, and a pessimistic view of the affliction prevailed. Kitwood was one of a small group of pioneers who created a new social psychology of dementia. It incorporated biomedical considerations, but went beyond this to include factors related to personality, life history and social interaction, putting the person, not the disease, at the centre of dementia care.

Kitwood saw Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia as human problems. Too often sufferers were treated as a group rather than as individuals, their humanity neglected. The "new culture" of dementia care owes everything to the pioneering work of the Bradford Dementia Group which he led. His "dementia

care mapping" technique, a tool for the measurement of benevolent care, is now widely used in nursing and residential homes.

Kitwood contributed three books to the growing literature of dementia. *Concern for Others* explores the psychological basis for an ethic of care. *Person to Person: A Guide to the Care of those with Failing Mental Powers* (written with Kathleen Bredin) is a textbook of good practice. *And Dementia Reconsidered* examines the interplay of neurological and socio-psychological factors in dementia.

But Kitwood's personality made as great a contribution to his work as did his knowledge. He could be edgy at times, but he worked, lived and spoke with a commitment and enthusiasm about the study and alleviation of dementia. He brought to every presentation something of the missionary intensity that had driven his Christianity. He was a strong supporter of organisations such as Age Concern and the Alzheimer's Disease Society.

Tom Kitwood was divorced in 1986. He is survived by his son and daughter.

PERSONAL COLUMN

Advertisement for 'Ceramics' featuring 'Ceramic Tiles' and 'Ceramic Wallpapers'.

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Advertisement for 'FLATSHARE' and 'ANNOUNCEMENTS'.

Advertisement for 'FLIGHTS DIRECTORY' and 'ANNOUNCEMENTS'.

Advertisement for 'ANNOUNCEMENTS' and 'DENTISTRY OR BEAUTY CULTURE?'.

Advertisement for 'ANNOUNCEMENTS' and 'ON THIS DAY'.

Advertisement for 'ANNOUNCEMENTS' and 'ON THIS DAY'.

Advertisement for 'ANNOUNCEMENTS' and 'ON THIS DAY'.

Advertisement for 'ANNOUNCEMENTS' and 'ON THIS DAY'.

Advertisement for 'ANNOUNCEMENTS' and 'ON THIS DAY'.

NEWS

French court releases Shayler

David Shayler, the renegade former MI5 officer wanted in Britain for allegedly leaking secrets to a newspaper, was freed from a Paris jail yesterday after a French court rejected the British Government's bid to extradite him.

Last night Whitehall lawyers were considering what action to take after the setback which caused considerable embarrassment to the Government.

Hereditary peers to pay for defiance
The Government put its efforts to axe the voting rights of hereditary peers at the top of its priorities last night after blaming them for frustrating the will of the people over the European elections Bill.

MP's brief apology
Geoffrey Robinson made a 54-second apology to MPs yesterday for breaking parliamentary rules. The Paymaster-General delivered the statement after the Standards and Privileges Committee forced him to the floor to explain his failure to register a shareholding.

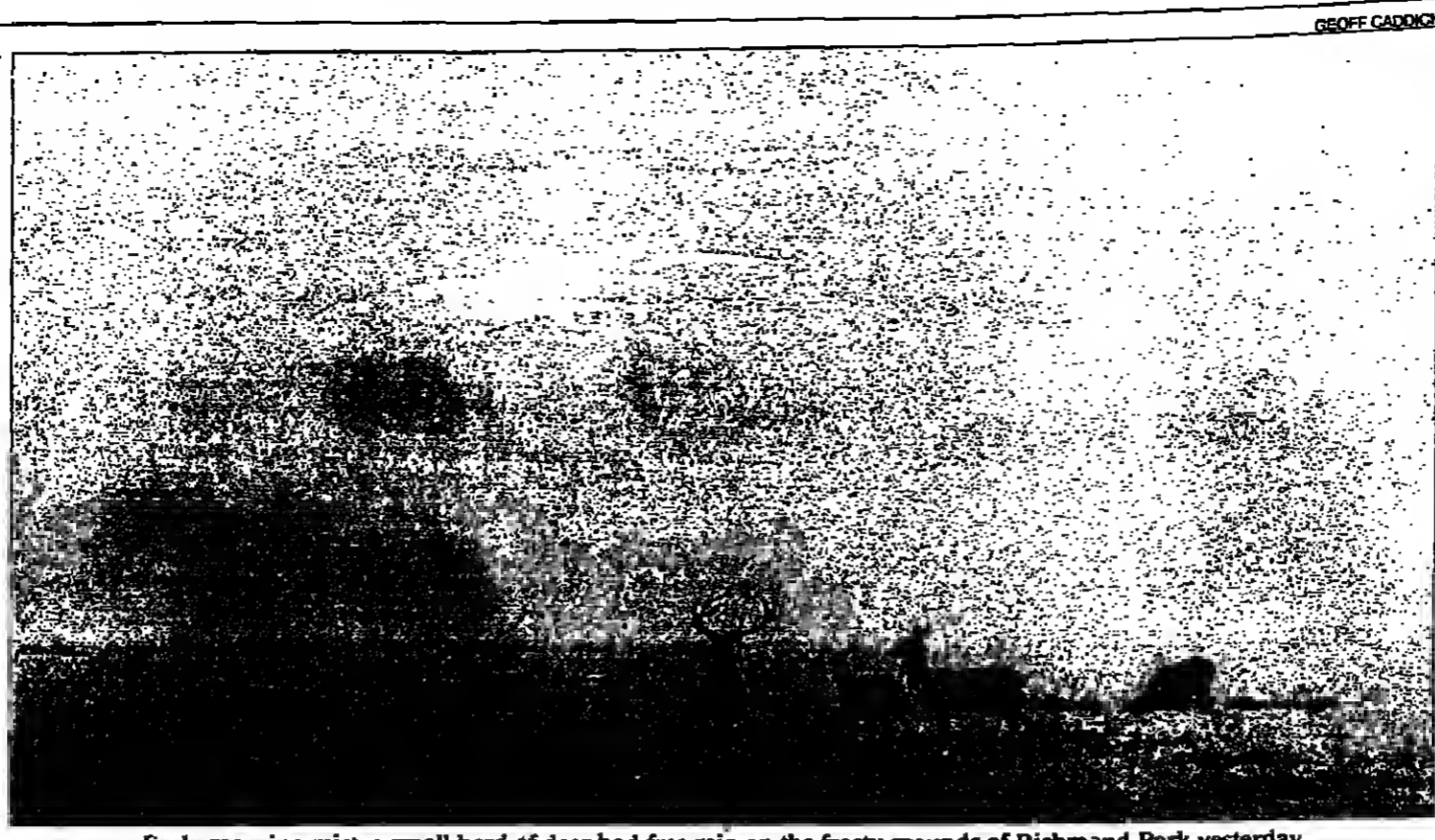
Missile on target
A Royal Navy nuclear-powered submarine fired an armed Tomahawk land-attack cruise missile for the first time, aiming it at a simulated communications facility on an island.

Murder appeal lost
Winston Silcott yesterday lost his attempt to have a second murder conviction re-examined by the Court of Appeal. Cleared on appeal of the murder of PC Keith Blakelock, he hoped to win his freedom from jail.

RUC 'lies' attacked
Chris Patten yesterday denounced as a "piece of fiction" a highly inflammatory report that suggested his policing commission was considering the effective disbandment of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Working week curbed
Higher prices in the shops and extra costs of more than £1 billion for the NHS were forecast yesterday as the European Commission announced plans to widen restrictions on working hours.

Diary dents Davy Crockett legend
The King of the Wild Frontier returned from beyond the grave to haunt American imaginations yesterday, when a diary purporting to tell the story of Davy Crockett's final - and unromantic - moments at the Alamo went on the auction block.



Early morning mist: a small herd of deer had free rein on the frosty grounds of Richmond Park yesterday

BUSINESS

Aerospace bonanza: British Aerospace and Sweden's Saab were among the winners as South Africa unveiled a £3 billion arms-buying programme.

Christmas fear: Safeway reported a fall in first half profits and gave warning of difficult trading conditions in the run-up to the crucial Christmas season.

Rates: Hopes of another cut in interest rates were revived by a fall in retail sales in October and news that the Bank of England's monetary policy committee voted for a cut this month.

Markets: The FTSE 100 fell 28.7 to 5474.0. The pound fell 25 cents to \$1.6733 and 66 pennings to DM2.79. The pound index fell to 100.7 from 100.9.

SPORT

Football: Hundreds of shareholders are expected at the Manchester United agm at Old Trafford today to hear about the club's projected takeover by BSkyB.

Rugby unions: Rob Wainwright, the former Scotland captain, is contemplating the end of his international career after being dropped against South Africa.

Cricket: The captain has prevailed over the coach and England intend to start the first Test match against Australia without a seventh specialist batsman.

Snooker: Ronnie O'Sullivan withdrew from the United Kingdom Championship suffering from "physical and mental exhaustion" and is expected to be out of the game until February.

ARTS

New movies: John Frankenheimer whips up his best car chase since French Connection II in the new Robert De Niro film, Ronin; plus Les Misérables without the songs.

Stompy weather: The Almeida reviews Ostrovsky's The Storm, the music of Jerry Herman fills the Vaudeville, and Sheffield does Twelfth Night proud.

Nights in: Get out a video - John Boorman's gripping The General, or Julie Christie in Afterglow - or listen to a classical CD from our critics' choices.

Nights out: Reviews of Pulp's tour debut in Hereford, the Vienna Philharmonic and a Japanese dance phenomenon - and the Melbourne Festival.

FEATURES

Dr Thomas Sutcliffe: Cannabis; Harley Street; a flesh-eating disease; the benefits of a Spanish diet; Huntington's disease.

Star quality: Hillary Clinton's American Vogue cover confirms the massive grassroots support for the First Lady.

Money trouble: How even the warmest friendships founder over money.

Best buys: Wintery but warm nights with a train-hotel deal in Edinburgh; early ski break in Austria; top-value holidays in Egypt, Bali and Kenya.

Clinton leaves today for an Iraq-delayed trip to Asia. He may happily miss Ken Starr's testimony tomorrow, but this won't be one of those trips to bask in overseas applause. Japan has disappointed, yet again, on an important trade matter. And throughout Asia a deepening economic decline provides a gloomy backdrop.

RADIO & TV

Preview: How germ warfare has reversed the role of medicine. Science at War (BBC2, 9.25pm) Review: Joe Joseph on the eternally non-threatening Cliff Richard. Pages 54, 55

OPINION

Triple offender
Geoffrey Robinson is not accused of fraudulent or criminal conduct; but he has thrice been found guilty of a lack of candour. If Tony Blair wants to be seen as different, he should need no prompting as to the right course.

Underground hold-up
One part of Peter Mandelson's department is therefore costing the other money and grief.

Lessons of Newbury
The dominance of policy by the road lobby is in danger of giving way to similar myopia by the anti-road lobbyists.

ANATOLE KALETSKY
Why is the British political debate on Europe drawn like a magnet to irrelevant economic issues, such as the effects of the single currency on levels of interest rates, unemployment or exports? It should be concentrated on... the pledge to drive forward the further development of a political union in Europe.

MAGNUS LINKLATER
Some children in secondary schools have been found to be addicts. This is the harsh reality that routinely confronts our teachers. The notion that every errand child should be summarily expelled... bypasses that reality.

VACLAV HAVEL
The less our era favours politicians who engage in long-term thinking, the more such politicians are needed.

Jacques Médecin, former mayor of Nice; Doug Wright, Kent and England bowler; Professor Tom Kitwood, dementia expert

Scottish devolution and a weakened Union; changing the culture of medicine; Falklands replies to President Menem; Russian hospice crisis; the birthday Prince; who should judge MPs?; Teletubby Advent calendars

WEATHER

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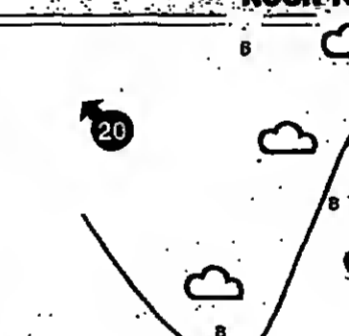
FORECAST

General: central and E Britain generally dry with early fog and frost lifting to leave cloud and a little hazy sunshine. Wales and W England may start dry and cold, but rain will edge in, with snow possible over the mountains. N Ireland mostly cloudy with rain; west brighter later. Cloud and rain in W Scotland with snow over NW Highlands.

TOMORROW

IN THE TIMES
DIGITAL WORLD
Surreal imaging magic with Sinead O'Connor - and everything else you need to know about digital photography
EDUCATION
How girls' schools keep ahead in the league tables

NOON TODAY



Changes to chart from noon: high A is slow-moving. High B drifts east and intensifies. Low C obscures low C as it moves northeast and deepens, while low E deepens and runs east.

AROUND BRITAIN YESTERDAY

Table showing weather conditions (Sun, Rain, Fog, etc.) and wind speeds for various locations like Aberdeen, London, Manchester, etc.

ABROAD

Table showing weather conditions for various international cities like Moscow, Tokyo, Sydney, etc.

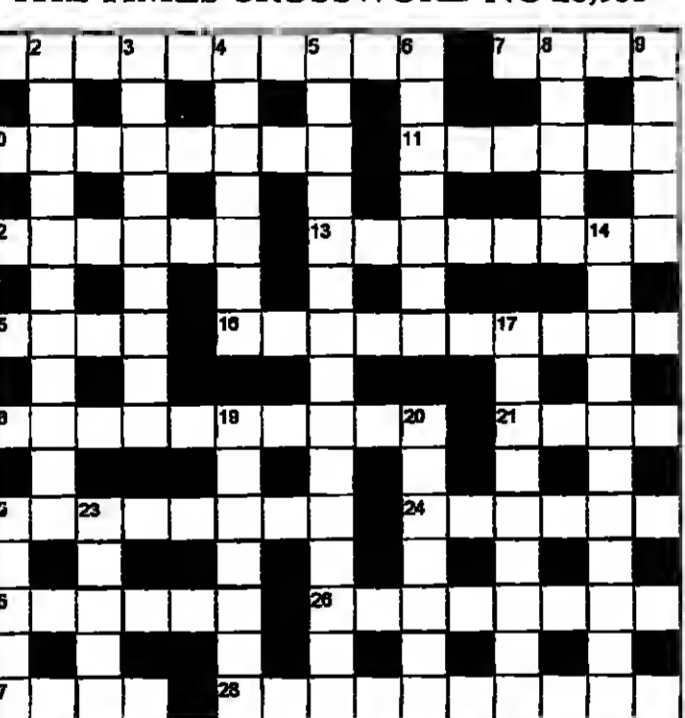
HIGH TIDES

Table showing high tide times for various locations like Aberdeen, London, etc.

HIGHEST & LOWEST

Yesterday: Highest day temp: Causton Sands, Devon, 12C (54F); lowest day temp: Avonmouth, Highland, 0C (32F); highest rainfall: St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, 6.1in; highest sunshine: Weymouth, Dorset, 7.8hr

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,953



ACROSS
1 Virile plebeian? (3-7)
7 Discarded tools may be kept in one (4)
10 Military's policy's off course, but about to obtain backing (8)
11 Like some fish that are caught using the net? (2-4)
12 Survivor got out of wreck of course (6)
13 One has belief in God, involving most of all the hope of perfection (8)
15 Site of historic listed building (4)
16 Scale in F - hear the variation (10)
18 This gives the plot of affairs of the heart (10)
21 Cover piano completely (4)
22 European not missed in India? (8)
24 Wooden cube, for example, holding tons (6)
25 Girl Guide returned, having secured female title (6)
26 Match-fit? (8)
27 Stay later than the others (4)
28 What high-fliers look for when the pressure eases? (6,4)
DOWN
1 Rub out earlier expression in a note (11)
3 Musicians ready - then not allowed in audition? (5,4)
4 'Crooked-Nose' the sprite, in person? (7)
5 Criminal activity in the Sun? It's a ridiculous charge (8,7)
6 See 1 do see, struggling with chapter? (7)
8 Haircut Italian got in Western part of island (5)
9 Fantasy Disney originally put down on paper (5)
14 Part of England mentioned in fatuous passages read aloud? (6,5)
17 Variety act that could have host in my power, in short? (9)
19 Tragic hero excessively cut up over torment with love? (7)
20 Great service I have? (7)
22 Daughter brought in by, say, dinner going (5)
23 Complaint from mother over words added to letter (5)
Solution to Puzzle No 20,952
ROBE DEVILSBIT
ER A L I O Q H
G E O M E T R I C C O N T E
I S G K T K V W
U N S E A T B O R D I N G
S N I R U V R
P O P P O U R R I T R E M S
R E I A U E
O R I O P S A N S S E R I E
F E O H A O
E A G L E O W L G L I D E R
S E T O V I W
W E S T M A N O E U R E
I S A L I N A A
R E G U S I A N C Y T O N I E R
Times Two Crossword, page 56

HOURS OF DARKNESS

Table showing sunrise and sunset times for various locations like London, Edinburgh, Manchester, etc.

NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING

Recycled paper made up 46.0% of the raw material for UK newspapers in 1997

Advertisement for 'nothing.cryptic@demon' with contact information and a logo.

Advertisement for GORE-TEX fabric, highlighting its waterproof, windproof, and breathable properties.

Large vertical advertisement on the right side of the page, featuring 'THE BOX' logo and text about 'High street' and 'defeat cost'.

THE TIMES

2

INSIDE SECTION
2
TODAY



BUSINESS
Communication software targets the big spenders
PAGE 35



ARTS
Jarvis Cocker and Pulp hit the road running
PAGES 40-43



SPORT
Burns driven by desire to overtake McRae
PAGES 48-56

TELEVISION AND RADIO
Pages 54, 55

BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 19 1998

Safeway braces itself for tough trading

BY SARAH CUNNINGHAM
RETAIL CORRESPONDENT

SAFEGWAY, the supermarket group, has reported sharply lower first-half profits and said that this Christmas may be the toughest in years for food retailers.

Colin Smith, chief executive, said: "We expect the important Christmas trading period to be more challenging for the sector this year than for many years and the strength of our anticipated second-half profit recovery will depend upon the industry trading conditions which prevail within the coming months."

In the six months to October 10, pre-tax profits fell from £228.8 million to £187.4 million on sales up 8 per cent to £4.27 billion. The fall came as a result of investments in offering triple loyalty card points on some purchases, in increasing staffing and in improving fresh food availability.



British Aerospace and Saab will share the revenues and the workload from the deal to manufacture the Gripen aircraft, pictured over Cape Town

BaE and Saab in £1.5bn South African jet deal

BY ADAM JONES
AND RAY KENNEDY
IN JOHANNESBURG

BRITISH AEROSPACE and Saab, the Swedish group in which it has a 35 per cent stake, were among the biggest winners yesterday as South Africa unveiled an arms-buying programme worth more than £3 billion.

BaE is still waiting for hundreds of millions of pounds due from Saudi Arabia. BaE shares rose from 465p to 474p. BaE and Saab are now negotiating for a final contract to supply 24 Hawk trainers and 28 Gripen fighters.

However, it seems certain that BaE's Royal Ordnance subsidiary is to lose out on a vital contract to supply gun propellant to the Ministry of Defence. It is widely assumed that Denel of South Africa has won the order. BaE is in last-ditch talks with the MoD to try to get at least some of the work subcontracted to Bishopston, near Glasgow, with the possible loss of 300 jobs, and an admission

that BaE is still waiting for hundreds of millions of pounds due from Saudi Arabia. BaE shares rose from 465p to 474p. BaE and Saab are now negotiating for a final contract to supply 24 Hawk trainers and 28 Gripen fighters.

The debt hit BaE's interim results and share price in September, even though it said it was confident of getting the money soon. A BaE spokesman said: "We remain as confident as we were."

Glaxo has cure for Zantac patent headache

BY PAUL DURMAN

GLAXO WELLCOME has overcome the demise of Zantac, its ulcer drug, and is showing an increase in underlying sales once again. But growth in migraine drug sales have disappointed expectations, and the HIV market has also slowed.

The pharmaceuticals company said it remained on track to meet its performance targets. It has previously said that, leaving aside the impact of currency fluctuations, it expects to maintain earnings this year.

Yesterday it said: "If exchange rates were to remain at October 31 levels for the rest of 1998, the earnings for the year as a whole would be adversely affected by some 6 per cent relative to 1997." Glaxo Wellcome's sales for the first ten months of the year were £6.4 billion, a 1 per cent rise at constant exchange rates, but a 4 per cent fall when reported in sterling.

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES

FTSE 100	5474.0	(-28.7)
Yield	2.85%	
FTSE All Share	2517.7	(-13.30)
Nikkei	14899.23	(+188.23)
New York	8977.25	(-9.03)
Dow Jones	1136.44	(-2.88)
S&P Composite		

US RATE

Federal Funds	4 1/2%	(4 1/2%)
Long bond	107 1/2%	(8 3/4%)
Yield	5.54%	(5.30%)

LONDON MONEY

3-mth interbank	6 3/4%	(6 3/4%)
Libor long g		
Libor 6m	118.34	(115.49)

STERLING

New York	1.6720*	(1.6755)
London	1.6735	(1.6770)
DM	2.7906	(2.7978)
FF	3.2558	(3.2612)
SP	2.2692	(2.2727)
Yen	202.02	(202.70)
C index	100.7	(100.9)

DOLLAR

London	1.6895*	(1.6895)
FF	5.5895*	(5.5811)
SP	1.3745*	(1.3770)
Yen	121.23	(120.93)
S index	106.4	(106.3)

Tokyo close Yen 121.23

MONTH SECTOR

Brant15-day (Feb)	\$11.70	(\$11.80)
SOIL		

London close \$297.25 (\$294.65)

* denotes midday trading prices

Abbey deal

Abbey National showed its faith in UK consumers' continuing hunger for credit when it bought a trio of businesses trading under the Lombard banner from NatWest for £247 million. Page 30

Water fears

Hyder, the Welsh multi-utility, warned a pricing crackdown by the water industry regulator will return the industry to "the bad old days of the public sector." Page 31, Tempus 32

High street sales figures revive hopes of rate cut

BY ALASDAIR MURRAY, ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT

HIGH street sales growth slipped to its lowest level in nearly three years, raising fresh hopes that the Bank of England will cut rates again as early as next month.

poor October weather could partly explain the poor figures, the less volatile quarterly measure of growth also fell to its lowest level in three years. Sales of household goods were hardest hit falling 1.5 per cent during the month while textile, clothing and footwear sales also slipped 0.3 per cent. Economists gave warning that retailers in these sectors now

seemed unable to improve sales despite heavy discounting. The minutes of the November MPC meeting, which were also published yesterday, confirmed that the committee was in complete support of the half-point cut and that a number of members want to see rates fall again soon.

that further cuts would at some point be needed, but the lags in the economy meant that it was not optimal to make those cuts now," the minutes said. Economists said that most of the objections to reducing rates further seemed to be tactical rather than economic — a fear that too large a cut would cause the pound to plummet and may be viewed by the markets as a panic measure.

M&S woes force supplier to close factories

BY SARAH CUNNINGHAM

TRADING problems at Marks & Spencer, which is struggling to maintain its grip on the clothing market, are forcing one of its main suppliers, William Baird, to close two factories and lay off 477 staff.

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Lords defeat costs KPMG £1m

BY JASON NISSE

KPMG, the accountant, faces a legal bill of more than £1 million after losing a landmark House of Lords ruling on client confidentiality.

made while under Prince Jefri's control. The Sultan has fired his brother as head of the BIA and appointed Arthur Andersen, the firm of accountants, to take charge of Amedeo, the construction group previously run by Prince Jefri.

Court of Appeal but Prince Jefri decided to take the case to the Lords. Finding against KPMG, the Lords said it had to pay Prince Jefri's costs. These are expected to be at least as much as the £500,000 KPMG spent on the case.

The injunction was overturned by the Court of Appeal but Prince Jefri decided to take the case to the Lords. Finding against KPMG, the Lords said it had to pay Prince Jefri's costs. These are expected to be at least as much as the £500,000 KPMG spent on the case.

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High gas prices lift BG profits by £61m

By CARL MORTISHED
INTERNATIONAL
BUSINESS EDITOR

BG, the gas pipeline and exploration company, yesterday reported higher than expected profits due to good volume growth and high gas prices in the UK.

BG's operating profit increased by £61 million in the third quarter to £99 million, including a £53 million leap in profits at Transco, the pipeline business, to £62 million. At the pre-tax level, third-quarter profit almost doubled to £21 million.

Gas volumes are normally weak in the summer quarter but Transco benefited from a 6 per cent increase in volumes transported and a £12 million revenue gain from the cooler summer. Operating costs fell by £48 million, as part of the drive to reduce the cost base following the 13 per cent price cut imposed by Ofgas in 1997. Gas prices were unusually high in the third quarter, in part due to the unusually cool temperatures and a slow start-up to gas production from the Britannia field.

Volatility in the gas market has prompted Ofgas and Transco to form a working group to devise a new market to replace the flexibility market used to balance gas flow in the pipeline system.

BG said that it was on target for job reductions of 2,500 promised in September 1997. Philip Hammond, finance director, said that BG Exploration had reviewed all its assets on the basis of a \$12 (£7) oil price and had concluded no writedowns were necessary.



Helpfire Group, the accident management assistance company, is buying Countrywide Assistance for almost £2 million, to be funded by an £8.9 million share placing. Pictured (left to right) are Michael Symons, Helpfire chief executive, Mark Jackson, deputy chief executive, and David Lindsay, financial adviser

Abbey National snaps up NatWest credit providers

By ADAM JONES

ABBEY NATIONAL yesterday showed its faith in UK consumers' continuing hunger for credit when it bought a trio of businesses from NatWest.

The stock market responded by marking up the shares of

both banking groups after Abbey paid NatWest £347 million in cash for Lombard Motor Finance, Lombard Tricity Finance and Lombard Business Equipment Leasing.

The three businesses, which employ 2,100 people, lend money to consumers and small

businesses through intermediaries such as retailers, including Dixons. Abbey will re-name the three and integrate them into its First National credit arm. NatWest will keep its other Lombard businesses, including Lombard Direct.

Tim Ingram, head of Abbey

National's consumer finance operation, said that it was too early to say what would happen to staffing in the businesses that it is buying.

Mr Ingram admitted that the consumer credit market had weakened recently, with Abbey National tightening its

lending criteria, but said that the bank had long-term faith in this area of lending.

NatWest said that the sale, which will lead to a profit of £115 million before tax, is consistent with its strategy of dealing with credit customers directly, rather than through intermediaries.

NatWest is also selling some of the offshore activities of Coutts, its elite private banking arm, to Royal Bank of Canada. Analysts believe that the sum involved is less than £10 million.

The businesses serve institutional and corporate clients, managing funds and employee benefit plans and acting as corporate trustees.

Abbey National shares rose 13p to £12.41. NatWest rose 11p to 99p.

Defence firms to boost MoD salary

TEN defence companies are being asked to donate about £165,000 a year between them to boost the salary of a senior civil servant (Adam Jones writes). Tony Edwards was made head of defence export sales at the Ministry of Defence earlier this month. He is being

seconded from TI Group, the engineer, where he earned a basic salary of £315,000 last year as chairman of the aerospace interests. He starts at the MoD on Friday for an initial period of three years.

Mr Edwards will be paid £165,000 a year by the MoD,

with a performance-related bonus of up to £15,000 a year. This civil service salary would traditionally have been augmented by payments by TI. However, the Government has ended this practice, saying it is worried that there could be a conflict of interest.

To ensure that the MoD could still recruit a top-ranking executive, the Defence Industries Council, a grouping of defence companies pledged to top up his salary.

TI will not contribute but will still pay some of Mr Edwards's pension contributions.

Judge tells Microsoft to alter software

By CHRIS AYRES

MICROSOFT, the software group embroiled in a bitter anti-trust legal battle with the US Justice Department, yesterday received a further blow when it was ordered to alter its Windows 98 and Internet Explorer software.

A US judge, Ronald Whyte, issued a preliminary injunction, saying that Microsoft had probably violated a contract with Sun Microsystems by improperly using the company's Java computer language in its Windows operating system.

The ruling casts a further shadow over Microsoft, which has been accused of using bullying tactics to crush its competitors.

The court ruling was the result of a lawsuit launched by Sun last year accusing Microsoft of copyright infringement and unfair competition. Sun claims that Microsoft bought a licence to use Java, and then created a Windows-only version of the language.

According to Sun, the Windows version of Java now poses a serious threat to the original language, because Microsoft holds a near monopoly of the personal computer operating system market.

Microsoft yesterday said that it was "disappointed" at the outcome, but would comply with the court ruling.

A spokesman said: "We respect the court's ruling and are reviewing our legal options. This is a preliminary ruling and only one step in the broader lawsuit. Microsoft remains confident that once all the facts are presented to the court, Microsoft will be seen to be in compliance with its contract."

TOURIST RATES

	Bank	Bank
	Days	Spa
Australia \$	20.85	18.99
Austria Sch	60.85	53.89
Belgium F	2.718	2.530
Canada C	0.8706	0.7991
Cyprus Cyp £	1.21	10.52
Denmark Kr	5.91	5.30
France Mk	9.05	8.20
France F	6.85	6.08
Germany DM	2.058	2.114
Greece Dr	495	458
Hong Kong \$	13.78	12.58
India Rs	129	109
Indonesia Rp	16384	11384
Japan Yen	117.9	108.9
Israel Sh	7.25	6.95
Italy Lit	2.971	2.704
Japan Yen	21.631	200.38
Malaysia M	0.654	0.605
Netherlands Gld	3.342	3.047
New Zealand \$	3.24	3.01
Norway Kr	13.01	12.07
Portugal Esc	205.06	277.05
S Africa R	10.15	9.19
Spain Ptas	166.64	230.46
Sweden Kr	14.13	13.08
Switzerland F	2.453	2.29
Taiwan N	102.76	478.99
USA \$	1.780	1.637

Rates for small denomination banknotes only as quoted by Reuters Bank. All rates apply to traveller's cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

Wife of Colt chief sells £5m of shares

MARGARET CHISHOLM, the wife of Paul Chisholm, chief executive of Colt Telecom, yesterday sold more than £5 million worth of shares in the company. Mrs Chisholm sold 800,000 shares at 664p each, compared with the price after flotation in December 1996 of just 67p. The company's shares have performed strongly since flotation, peaking at 832p this year before the recent market turmoil, and lifting the company into the elite FTSE 100.

A source close to the group said: "This is less than 8 per cent of his [Mr Chisholm's] holdings. It really was only because there are very few periods during the year that you can sell shares. As far as I know, there is no intended use of the cash." Mr Chisholm's family now owns 2.4 million shares in Colt and has options over 6.8 million shares worth a total of £65 million. Colt shares fell 2p to 710p, Colt's largest investor is Fidelity Investors, which owns a 35 per cent stake in the company. Fidelity was the sole financial backer of Colt before it came to the stock market, and has not sold any shares since its flotation. Other shareholders include The Capital Group and The Bank of New York. Commentary, page 31

NZ purchase for RSA

ROYAL & SunAlliance, the UK's largest general purpose insurer, is to buy Guardian Assurance, the New Zealand life business, from Guardian Royal Exchange for NZ\$182.5 million (£58 million). RSA said it will now have about NZ\$2.2 billion funds under management, an increase of 47 per cent and, by in-force premiums, will rank fourth in that market. Earlier this year RSA acquired the New Zealand life insurance and investment management subsidiaries of Norwich Union, and also announced a tie up with Southern Cross, the country's largest medical insurer.

Sema in NHS deal

SEMA GROUP has been chosen to replace Computer Sciences Corporation as the central systems co-ordinator for the National Health Service in Scotland. The contract is worth up to £60 million over five years, with the possibility to extend for two more years. Sema is to work with the NHS in a project to modernise its systems, and 140 staff, mostly in Edinburgh, Paisley and Dundee, will transfer to the group. The contract with Computer Sciences has been controversial and dogged with problems. Sema will start work immediately but will not take charge of the entire project until next April.

Friendly wins contract

FRIENDLY HOTELS has been awarded a 30-year contract to operate three hotels with a total of 300 rooms in Brighton, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, and Wigan. The company has been awarded the contract by Norwich Union, which has just acquired the properties from the independent Oak Hotels chain in a deal brokered by Brodie Marshall Hotels, the property agent. Friendly also said yesterday that its United Kingdom hotel occupancy in the current year is 4 per cent ahead of last year, with average room rate up 7.2 per cent.

Saatchi's Toyota task

SAATCHI & SAATCHI, the advertising agency, has won the pan-European launch advertising account for Toyota's new small Yaris car, worth £70 million. The agency also said that it is to expand its work for Visa EU after the card issuer chose it to handle integrated communications in Europe; the account is worth \$35 million (£21 million), Saatchi said. Advertising for the Yaris launch is to break in 17 countries from April 1999. Saatchi said that it won the Yaris work in a pitch against six other European agencies and the extra Visa work against competition from BBDO and J Walter Thompson.

Belgo buys restaurant

BELGO, the fast-growing restaurant operator, is to acquire the former White Tower restaurant in the West End of London from Roy Ackerman's The Restaurant Partnership for a total of about £450,000. It is issuing 3.9 million shares — worth £312,000 at yesterday's price of 8p — and paying £150,000 in cash. It will spend £200,000 converting it to an upmarket Vietnamese eatery akin to Pasha, its fashionable Moroccan restaurant. Tonight the group will open its latest Belgo moules et frites outlet in Bristol, following an £870,000 investment.

Probus profits revive

PROBUS ESTATES, the property company, said that its financial position had improved as it reported pre-tax profits of £3.26 million for the year to September 30, compared with a loss of £24.89 million last time. The company said it intends to acquire further properties, is negotiating to sell the Waterdale Shopping Centre in Doncaster and plans substantially to re-develop its hotel and leisure properties in Aviemore. Turnover for the period was £7.23 million (£7.83 million), with earnings per share at 2.4p, up from a loss 32.0p per share.

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Royal audience for the MPC



COMMENTARY

by our City Editor

When Her Majesty the Queen took her farewell of the members of the Monetary Policy Committee yesterday, she was probably little wiser than the rest of us as to what they intend to do with interest rates next month. But if she had been listening to the car radio as she travelled round the City, she would have been left in little doubt about what they should do. The pressure for a further cut is mounting, and it should be a half point rather than another quarter.

Intriguingly, the volatile Wilhelm Butler had opted for a novel three-quarter point cut in October but failed to persuade his colleagues to be brave. But if they were wary of over-kill then, they should have no such qualms now. The retail sales figures that came out yesterday are a grim acknowledgement that the recession has hit the high street. When Marks & Spencer's Sir Richard Greenbury told the world that consumer spending had fallen off a cliff, he was speaking from the shop floor. He clearly did not envisage the drastic consequences that his outspoken comments might have for his own company but he did give many other retailers the satisfaction of knowing that they were not alone in their suffering.

The vital Christmas season and that will have ramifications that ricochet well beyond retailing and out towards the dwindling manufacturing base of the country.

The Queen had, no doubt, been listening to the financial news as she sped towards the Bank of England, so she would have known of the fall in retail sales. She might also have heard of the latest factory closures, at M&S supplier William Baird. There was a furore earlier this year when M&S suggested to its suppliers that they would have to look at ways that they could pare down prices, even considering whether this might mean sourcing more from overseas. That trend now seems inescapable, as producers in the Third World become ever more sophisticated.

In which case, Her Majesty's opening comments to the MPC might have been a very slight deviation from the norm. Instead of "What do you do?", Her Majesty could have inquired: "What are you going to do about it?" In the United States, the Federal Reserve has shaved another quarter point off interest rates. The MPC must move further and faster.

Maybe Michael Marks of Merrill Lynch was brave enough to suggest that Her Majesty might relay that message to the MPC. The Queen would not have wanted to tread on sore feelings by mentioning the matter of job losses at Merrill itself. But there is a sad irony in the fact that her visit to the Square Mile coincides with a period when City workers are collecting their P45s at the rate of hundreds every day.

Saying sorry is not enough, Minister

Goffrey Robinson is renowned as the millionaire businessman member of the Government. He is also, however, the member prone to oversights when it comes to declaring his directorships, and the trust beneficiary who chooses to keep his interests in offshore tax havens. These would be dubious qualifications for a treasury minister in a

banana republic, but in Britain they are surely unacceptable. Mr Robinson has until now treated his critics scathingly. Yesterday, a House of Commons Select Committee demanded that he should at least apologise for his third failing to comply with House rules.

However, an apology is not enough. Given the heavy agenda facing the Treasury, it is vital that the role of Paymaster General goes to someone whose own financial dealings will not cast a shadow over the work that must be done for the country's financial benefit.

There are still many questions left unanswered about Mr Robinson's business dealings. Did he ever provide a reasonable explanation for why the accounts of Hollis Group, a company of which he was chairman in 1990, record that he was paid a hefty £200,000 for his work? Mr Robinson claimed that he received no money from Hollis, and used that an excuse for not having declared his chairman-ship to Parliament.

Mr Robinson's offshore trusts also remain something of a mystery. We do not know the full extent of the funds that are in them, nor do we know why the wonderfully named Madame Bourgoise should have chosen to endow the trusts so generously for Mr Robinson's benefit.

But given the fact that the Government is now going to be examining the tax position of the Channel Islands, Mr Robinson's interests once more put him at risk of suggestions of potential conflict of interest.

His wealth, while not to be begrudged by those who do not have such fortunes, does nonetheless appear to have coloured his views in a way that may make it difficult for him to identify with the Treasury's rank-and-file customers. Mr Robinson, you may recall, did have trouble coming up with a suitable design for a new savings product that would be accessible by all. The painful confinement of the Isa, which has still to result in a happy

event, is not a good advertisement for Mr Robinson's talents.

But what ever his abilities, it is his complicated business background that makes Mr Robinson's continued position in the Treasury untenable, despite the determined support of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Safeway success is educating Archie

Safeway has arrived at a crossroads. It has just ended its expensive campaign of offering piles of extra points to its loyalty card holders. The campaign had a dramatic effect on increasing sales, and Safeway must now prove that it can keep up the momentum without spending another fortune on promotions.

Only two weeks have passed since the campaign ended, but so far so good. This leaves one wondering not so much about what will happen to Safeway from now on, but what on earth has been going on at J Sainsbury and, particularly, Asda. Sainsbury's said not so long ago that its sales were up by a much slimmer degree, while Safeway also appears to be beating Asda.

Asda's whole strategy is based on beating its rivals on same-store sales, so something must have gone very wrong.

As if Archie Norman did not have enough to worry about at Central Office, arranging the Ikea chairs and recruiting fashion designers to the cause, he now has a lot to concern him in Leeds. To add insult to injury, the value of his options will also have taken a hammering.

Asda does not report its figures until mid-December, and even then it will be as parsimonious with up-to-date trading information as usual. But if its sales are as the market is beginning to fear, then Asda is also at a crossroads and Norman may have to begin putting a bit more of his energy and innovation back into the business that made his name.

Is Colt a mare?

IS THERE an odd one out in the following list? Betterware, DFS Furniture, Harris Queensway and Colt Telecom? Investors in the latter — the superstellar performing Colt — will certainly hope so because shares in all the others never recovered after directors decided to sell down part of their holdings at what subsequently proved to be at or near the peak. However, the decision by Paul Chisholm, Colt's chief executive, to sell down part of his holding has a worryingly familiar ring to it.

Price crackdown will hit services warns Hyder

BY CHRISTINE BUCKLEY, INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

WATER pipes will leak more and sewers will fall into disrepair in a return to "the bad old days of the public sector", unless the water regulator revises early plans for a pricing crackdown.

That was the warning given yesterday by Hyder, the Welsh multi-utility, which is facing a 15 to 20 per cent cut in its prices from 2000. The cut will mean £60 million to £80 million off revenues.

Graham Hawker, chief executive, said the company could go to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission if it remained fundamentally opposed to the pricing plans after the year-long negotiations. However, he added that "the nuclear option is something you use very carefully".

Hyder believes short-term squeezes on prices will limit its ability to make long-term investment in infrastructure and that eventually, the system could deteriorate seriously.

The price pressure on Hyder could trigger a dividend cut. For the six months to the end of September the company raised its dividend by only 3 per cent to 16.8p a share. Mr

Hawker said Hyder would have to review dividend growth that was "clearly unsustainable" after regulatory decisions by both the water and electricity watchdogs were clear. He said: "I don't know whether there will be a cut."

Comparing Hyder's gloom with the current high-growth dividend policies of other water companies, Mr Hawker said: "If there is a brick wall coming, it is better to walk sensibly to it rather than running towards it."

The company is trying to diversify to limit the impact of regulatory controls. Along with water price curbs it also faces a review of electricity distribution charges.

Hyder said it has recruited 305,000 gas customers and is waiting for a further 40,000 to pay off their debts to British Gas before they switch.

Profits from its infrastructure business, which involves public-private partnership work and the operation of overseas water utilities, rose to £16.7 million from £14.3 million, although £15.1 million of that was from the sale of operations.

On plans by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions to overhaul water pricing plans, Mr Hawker said Hyder favoured charging according to council tax bands. This would increase or decrease annual bills by about 5 per cent.

Hyder shares fell 28½p to 82½p on its half-year results which saw a 2.3 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £107.8 million. Earnings per share, before the impact of the windfall tax, rose from 53.7p to 64.7p.



Hawker: brick wall coming

Tempus, page 32



Looking up: Jim Hodgkinson, chief executive, left, and Tony Collyer, finance director at New Look's Oxford Street store

New Look puts stores on notice

NEW LOOK, the clothing retailer that floated in June, is giving its French and German businesses 18 months to return to profit or face closure (Sarah Cunningham writes).

The three French and 28 German stores made a loss of £600,000 in the first half, blemishing an otherwise strong performance which saw pre-tax profit rise from £19.9 million to £22.1 million. The latter figure is after £2 million flotation costs.

Like-for-like sales in the first half rose 2.7 per cent but have since fallen to a just under 1 per cent decline. Jim Hodgkinson, chief executive, said the current sales are "significantly better than the market as a whole".

Earnings per share rose from 7.4p to 8.3p and the company is paying an interim dividend of 1.8p. The shares, which traded at 109p when they came to market this year, rose 1p to 145p yesterday.

Tempus page 32

Britons boost Disney

A 20 per cent jump in British visitors to Disneyland Paris helped Euro Disney shrug off the effects of France's winning World Cup campaign with 1998 profits up a third to Fr290 million (£31 million). The UK is now its biggest market outside France (Dominic Walsh writes).

The 34 per cent rise in net income reflected a 6 per cent rise in underlying revenues and a contribution of almost Fr100 million from the nearby Val d'Europe development.

The number of visitors fell to 12.51 million, but average spend was up 3 per cent to Fr258. Revenues from hotels and restaurants were 10 per cent higher, while hotel occupancy rose from 78 per cent to 80.9 per cent.

Tempus, page 32

BA seeks Olympic Airways stake

FROM PHILIP PANGALOS IN ATHENS

BRITISH AIRWAYS is understood to be in talks to acquire a strategic 20 per cent stake in Olympic Airways, Greece's state-run national airline.

Senior Athens sources say that BA has already held talks with Greek Government representatives handling the proposed sale of a strategic stake in Olympic.

BA is said to have held talks with Salomon Smith Barney, the US investment bank advising the Greek Government on how to deal with the ailing Olympic Airways. Options include a strategic alliance with another carrier and the sale of a minority stake in the airline. A British Airways spokesman in Athens yesterday refused to comment.

News of BA's talks with Olympic has sparked renewed speculation that Lufthansa, the German carrier, may also be interested in acquiring a stake in Olympic. Lufthansa has previously denied that it was interested in acquiring a stake in Olympic, but its spokesman in Athens now says that "times can change", though any form of share exchange is entirely ruled out.

Meanwhile, Tassos Mandelias, Greece's Transport Minister, yesterday reiterated that the Government is in the process of modernising Olympic and is seeking a suitable strategic partner or investor. The Government is ready to sell 15 to 20 per cent of Olympic and is ready to discuss participation in the airline's management with its eventual partner. Olympic, founded by the late Aristotle Onassis, is the only airline in southern Europe not to have made an alliance in an increasingly competitive market place.

In April, the Government launched a restructuring plan for the loss-making Olympic. The five-year plan is intended to ensure that Olympic survives by saving at least £600 million. The plan, involving more state aid to help to ease Olympic's debt, was approved by the EU in September.

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STOCK MARKET

MICHAEL CLARK

Stock Market Writer of the Year

Domestic jitters keep investors on sidelines

THE celebrations that followed the third cut in US prime rates in less than three months proved short lived. Fresh jitters about the domestic economy provided a useful boost to government securities but undermined the equity market. Share prices gave up an early lead worried by the consequences of the latest drop in retail sales. There are fears among City investors that a lurch into recession is almost inevitable. Their concerns were highlighted by publication of the minutes of this month's Monetary Policy Committee meeting that showed one member calling for a cut of 0.75 percentage points. Dealers say the pressure will be back on the MPC to cut rates at next month's meeting in order to avert a recession.



Sir Stanley Kalms, left, chairman, and John Clare, chief executive of Dixons, whose shares jumped 29p to 699p

In the event, the FTSE 100 index gave up a 51.5 lead to close 287 down at 5,474.0 after an uncertain start to trading on Wall Street. The FTSE 250 index also shed 26.2 at 4,782.0 with the number of shares traded reaching 863 million.

This includes David Wright, chief executive, acquiring 100,000 shares, with Bob Morion, chairman, buying an extra 1.8 million. Incepta rose 1p to 171p.

its short of City forecasts. The company blamed the strong pound and high interest rates. A warning about second-half profits left European Motor Holdings down 10p to 54p. Ben Bailey was also in the doldrums falling 7p to 57p after it gave warning that profits would fall below expectations. But the housebuilder emphasised that profits would still be 25 per cent up on last year's £1.3 million.

A gloomy trading update was enough to leave Eclipse Blinds nursing a loss of 15p at 715p. The group says sales are running 10 per cent below last year's levels as market conditions continue to deteriorate. A near doubling of interim profits, an upbeat statement on trading and news of an acquisition lifted Hephre Group 25p to 532p. The group described trading as "hooyan". It is paying Misyss an initial £1.27 million for Countrywide Assurance. To finance the deal Hephre is arranging an open offer at 460p.

The recommended offer for Clyde Blowers added 23p to the shares at 160p. The management of the Glasgow boiler efficiency and materials handling group is offering 165p a share valuing the group at £24.5 million.

Shares of Avalon Oil were suspended at 6p after its banking facilities were withdrawn. The move has placed the company in a precarious position with regard to meeting short-term commitments.

RISE: Advanced Medical (44) 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100.

MAJOR INDICES

Table with columns for index name and value. Includes New York (midday), Dow Jones, S&P Composite, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Amsterdam, Sydney, Frankfurt, Singapore, Brussels, Paris, Zurich, London, and others.

RECENT ISSUES

Table listing recent issues with columns for company name, price, and change. Includes Anglian Water, Colson, First Active, Five Arrows, etc.

RIGHTS ISSUES

Table listing rights issues with columns for company name, price, and change. Includes Advanced Medical, Baxendale, etc.

MAJOR CHANGES

Table listing major changes with columns for stock name, close, and change. Includes Colson, Ben Bailey, etc.

TEMPUS

On a Hyder to nothing

IT seemed like such a good idea at the time. Put an electricity company and a water company together and efficiency savings will just gush out - all the way to shareholders. But it has not quite worked out like that for Hyder. The Welsh multi-utility, the regulators, perhaps believing in the synergy miracles that can be worked from fusing utility operations, are determined that the gains go to customers.

The water regulator is pushing for ultra-harsh price cuts and there is an electricity review around the corner too. Not only that but Hyder faces an onslaught from the nascent national energy companies looking for business in anyone's back yard. Moreover, after Hyder has paid the last instalment of the windfall tax, due before Christmas, it will be nearly 300 per cent poorer.

Hyder has given warning that unless Ofwat relieves its pricing stance the water infrastructure it manages could crumble through lack of investment. It could be over egging the pudding as it engages in the ritual dance with the regulator ahead of final pricing proposals.

The water price reduction currently envisaged is 15 to 20 per cent, which equates to about £60 million to £80 million off annual revenues for Hyder. That would knock profits for six and demolish dividend cover. The course is set, therefore, for a dividend cut. Maybe it is time to confront the regulators' optimistic view of efficiency, potential in multi-utilities, split water and electricity, and start all over again.

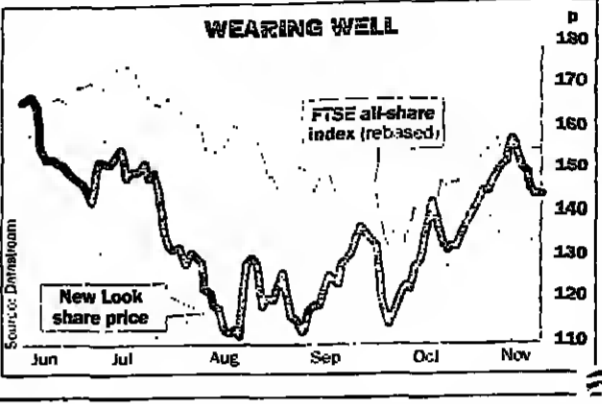
But for now, sell Hyder shares. relieves its pricing stance the water infrastructure it manages could crumble through lack of investment. It could be over egging the pudding as it engages in the ritual dance with the regulator ahead of final pricing proposals.

New Look

THE timing of New Look's June flotation was impeccable. A few weeks later and with the stock market falling and retail sales going the same way, it would almost certainly have had to pull out - for the second time.

The shares have suffered since then but investors need not feel too disappointed. The shares have not suffered as badly as some, and have recovered ground convincingly from their lowest point.

The company's way of doing business is a winner. It keeps up with fast-changing fashions, changes its collections every few weeks, and sells at low prices. Ambitions to build bigger stores with wider ranges will help like-for-like growth, although the company's view of how many more stores it can open is probably too optimistic.



Euro Disney

IN EARLY April, Euro Disney will unveil its latest visitor attraction called Honey. I Shrunk the Audience. This interactive theatre production is an uncomfortable reminder of Euro Disney's unfortunate past. In 1994 the whole outfit was teetering on the brink of bankruptcy with cumulative losses of Fr6 billion.

Back then it was in danger of terminal shrinkage. Yesterday's results, on the other hand, show how far Euro Disney has travelled along the road to recovery. Spend per head is on the up and hotel occupancy is rising. Labour and other costs are down and its marketing and pricing strategy is bearing fruit. Underlying revenues are up 6 per cent.

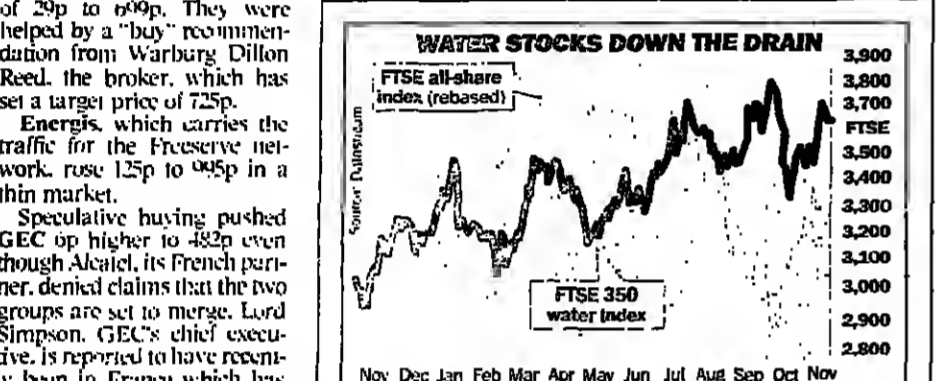
But there are still numerous hurdles to jump before Euro Disney can come anywhere near calling itself a normal company. This year's figures, for example, will not benefit

from the one-off property gain that helped last year. Royalty payments and management fees of Fr200 million due to Walt Disney, its 39 per cent shareholder, are set to hit in the current year.

Then in 2001 it must either redeem or refinance convertible bonds to the tune of more than Fr4 billion. The Disney connection means investment bankers are already queuing up with solutions, but the doubts prevent the shares from being anything other than a long-term hold. The Magic Kingdom is still some way off.

Meyer

MANY companies of Meyer's ilk have precious little grip on pricing power. As a rule, these days you would have thought that a builder's merchant would be about as squeezed as they come. Meyer, however, is confident it can control, build and protect its margins. Its 124,000 customers represent



and force the companies to spend more on cleaning up the environment. The outlook for the water companies appears bleak with future dividend under threat. Falls were seen in Hyder 23p to 825p, Thames 25p to £11.54, United Utilities 7p to 863p, Severn Trent 14p to £10.46, and Anglia 17p to 863p.

Credit Lyonnais Securities, the broker, maintains that Hyder will be the worst affected. It prefers the attractions of United Utilities and Anglia.

COMMODITIES

Table of commodity prices including Liffe, Oil, Gas, and other market data.

LIFFE OPTIONS

Table of Liffe options data including various contracts and prices.

LONDON FINANCIAL FUTURES

Table of London financial futures data including interest rates and other derivatives.

MONEY RATES (%)

Table of money rates for various terms and currencies.

EUROPEAN MONEY DEPOSITS (%)

Table of European money deposits for different currencies and terms.

GOLD/PRECIOUS METALS (Baird & Co.)

Table of gold and precious metals prices and market data.

DOLLAR RATES

Table of dollar rates for various countries and currencies.

OTHER STERLING

Table of other sterling rates and market data.

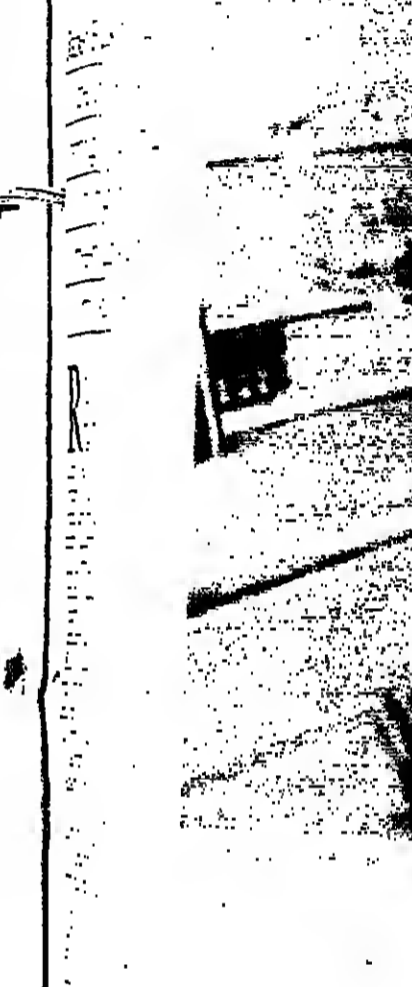
FTSE VOLUMES

Table of FTSE volumes for various stocks and sectors.

WALL STREET

Table of Wall Street market data including stock prices and indices.

Russia i as eco



Boat tie cut

كوتا من الاصل

Monopoly boards face challenge

The UK is about to have one of the toughest competition regimes in Europe. Cyrus Mehta assesses the strain that it will put on the OFT and the companies that it polices

The new Competition Act, which received Royal Assent last week, radically reforms the UK's competition law and paves the way for sweeping changes in the control of cartels, monopolies and anti-competitive behaviour.

in the coming months to conduct a "health check" on their existing agreements and practices, taking legal advice where appropriate. The Act outlaws anti-competitive agreements, and so a starting point will be to identify contracts containing restrictive clauses, such as:

- refusing to supply goods or services to a competitor or customer;
refusing to license intellectual property rights;
refusing to allow a competitor to use essential facilities;
"tying" or bundling non-related goods or services.

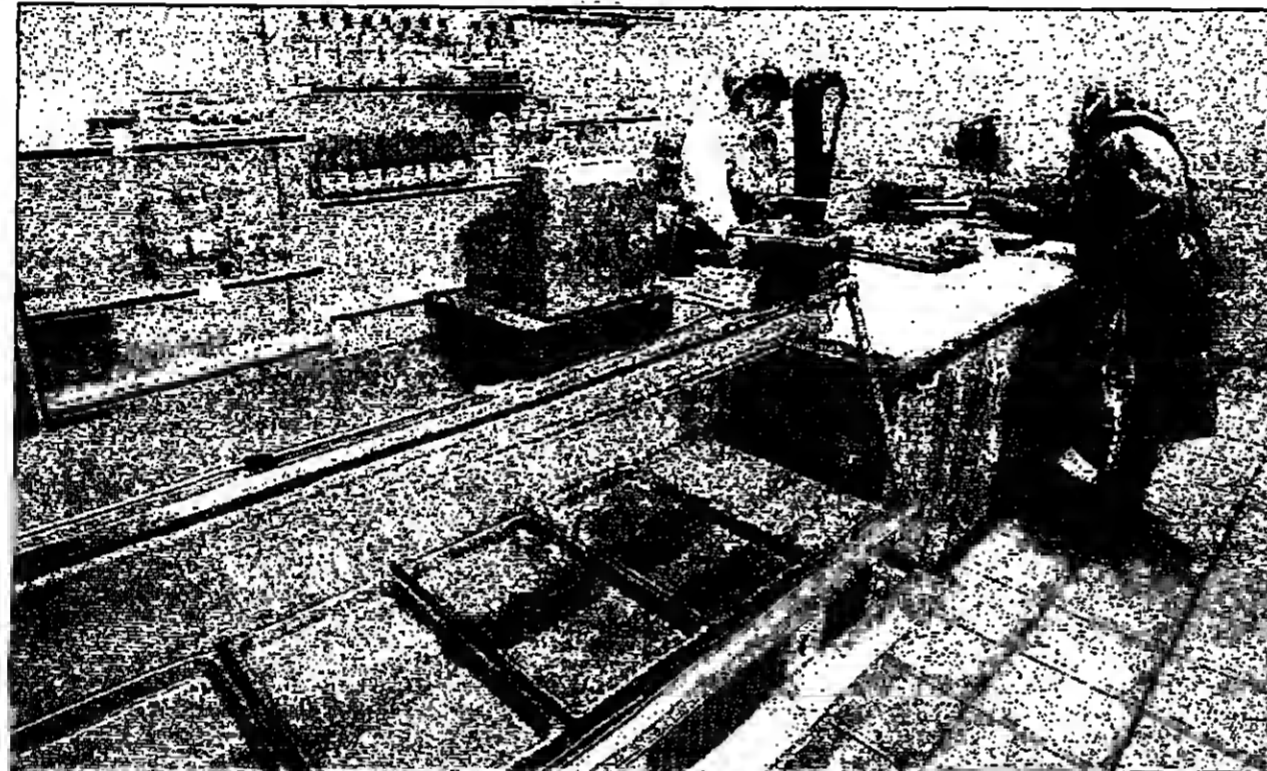
Perhaps the single most important change is that UK competition law will now focus on the economic impact of agreements or market strategies.

There are plans to recruit 50 new staff to deal with the anticipated workload. It is essential that the OFT is properly financed and resourced to deal with the volume of notifications, requests for guidance, complaints and investigations that it will undoubtedly face.

Russia in need of 'third way' as economic winter bites

Janet Bush says the IMF is wrong to cling to rigid free-market orthodoxy

Russia's parliament has this week been debating a bill that seeks to establish the basic needs of Russians in order to calculate minimum wages and pensions.



The quest for hard currency has taken precedence over food and fuel for a people yet to be won over to capitalism

so and oligarchs with Swiss bank accounts and Russian banks that were speculating against their own currency) the first tranche of a further \$22.6 billion in July.

ers to persuade the IMF to come up with new funds. Yuri Maslyukov, Deputy Prime Minister, said yesterday that, without more foreign money, Russia faced a "national catastrophe that would write off the free market economy, democracy and the territorial integrity of Russia".

ces of the Russian poor bracing themselves for winter, however, is a reality that is far more complex, and points to the absurdity of Western insistence on adherence to pure free market principles in the middle of an economic disaster zone.

ern charity. The Government is beginning to try to change this balance. Sergei Gerashov, Fuel and Energy Minister, has warned oil companies that they may face export restrictions if they do not supply domestic customers as well as those overseas.

only be successfully negotiated with the will of the people and if the fruits are shared more widely. It is also acknowledged that the state must play a role in Russia's revival and that, beyond the pressing need to sort out the banking system, restructure debt and stabilise the budget, there is a need for top-to-bottom structural reform, not just of the banking sector but also of the legal and tax systems.

BUSINESS LETTERS

Glaxo remains committed to its own R&D programme

From the Executive Director, Science and Technology, Glaxo Wellcome Sir, Comments made at a recent conference, as reported in your article "Glaxo is attacked on R&D" (November 13) give the misleading impression that Glaxo Wellcome's strategy is to increase outsourcing at the expense of its own world-class research and development capability.

tensive operation, epitomised by our Medicines Research Centre at Stevenage. Yet the pace of scientific advance is such that no one company can have the monopoly on new ideas, so we have entered into extensive partnerships with outside organisations.

FSA must promote high standards

From the Director, Consumers' Association Sir, Following your article today, "Financial Services Bill in Queen's Speech", November 12, the Consumers' Association would like to highlight the following concerns:

Whilst caveat emptor (buyer beware) is a valid principle, it cannot be the overriding guideline across the spectrum of retail financial products and services. Universal coverage is desirable to ensure that the FSA can be a one-stop shop for consumers and industry. The current omission of mortgages, for example, is worrying, and we hope this will be addressed in the Bill.

Bowe tie cut

STEPHEN RICHARDSON, managing director of Save & Prosper, has escaped from under the steel sultano of Collette Bowe. She is, of course, executive chairman of S&P, the retail investments company which is owned by Flemings. Richardson has endured what some insiders have seen as an awkward relationship with Bowe since the former head of the Personal Investment Authority was appointed above him a year ago, to perform much the same job.

in his mid-50s and after 15 years at Flemings, has suddenly decided "to pursue his career elsewhere". The bank denies any suggestion that there's been a rift, or that Chambers was upset by the decision some months ago to remove him from the group's holding board.



Tall story RUSSELL and Juliette Joffe, who sold their Café Flo chain to the similarly named but unrelated Groupe Flo of France four years ago, have quietly emerged with a new venture. They have opened a pan-world cuisine restaurant in Hampstead and plan a chain. The Joffes have always been quite clever with names, and the latest is no exception.

the takeaway menu. Giraffe on the hoof, has a ring to it, I suppose. Groupe Flo also has a cheap and cheerful chain in France called Hippopotamus. "No connection," says Russell. "Giraffe is a name I have always wanted to call a restaurant. Giraffe's a lovely animal - caring and friendly." But what if the French decide to open a zoo and offer to buy you out again? "Please God."

Stiff price MY thanks to Computer Weekly for introducing me to a bizarre new piece of business jargon. The magazine and various computer companies have declared war on "stiffing". This is the practice whereby software firms use the small print of their contracts to generate unearned revenue by insisting on huge payments for any slight variation.

Asda be... A BREATHELESS communication from the Marketing Society about next April's retail forum. "Next year's most important new marketing event" features "speakers of the stature of Allan Leighton, chief executive of Tesco". Hang on, I know Leighton, whose passion for Morris dancing has for some reason been left off recent CVs, has wrongly been reported as heading for Marks & Spencer. But he is at Asda, surely? Terry Leahy is Tesco's chief executive and a speaker, as it happens, at the Society's annual conference yesterday. If they know something he doesn't, reverse your place now.



Allan Leighton seems to be linked with anyone but Asda

Advertisement for a book titled 'Put a twist in the tale'. It features a large, stylized illustration of a person's face and the text 'PUT A TWIST IN THE TALE'. Below the title, it says 'BULLDOG' and 'retailable 30 weeks. See it now follow it at www.penguin.co.uk'.

NOVEMBER 19 1998
nothing
SEARCH WELL

Land Securities chief says rental growth may slip

By CARL MORTISHED

LAND SECURITIES, the property group, yesterday gave warning that the rate of rental growth could stall if recent bearish economic forecasts proved well founded. The company raised its half-year rental income by just £5.5 million, mainly because of contributions from new development. Land's revenue profit increased from £125.8 million to £143.7 million, and Peter Birch, chairman, gave warning that second-half revenue profits would not differ much. Mr Birch said that comparisons were being made in the property sector with the early 1990s, but he insisted that the fundamentals of the business were sound. Land Securities sees little sign of oversupply in the property market, but finds reduced demand for space in the City, with prospective tenants reluctant to take on new commit-

ments. Mr Birch said: "A potential shake-out in the financial sector remains a threat." The company's pre-tax profit rose from £124.7 million to £144.7 million in the six months to September, much of the rise resulting from a reduced interest bill. The group is heavily geared for a £650 million development programme that one analyst described as "perhaps badly timed". Several smaller property companies, such as Pillar and Helical Bar, have turned away from investing and are considering returning capital to shareholders. However, Ian Murray, Land's finance director said: "If there is more of a downturn, there could be reasonable buying opportunities." Work is proceeding on two office developments at Theobald's Road, WCI, let to Warner Bros and Nabarro Nathan-

son. Talks are in progress with Hammerson over phasing two developments in Birmingham, where Hammerson's huge Bull Ring redevelopment is likely to clash with Land's Martineau Galleries at a time when major retailers are re-thinking expansion plans. Discussions are also in progress with tenants to avoid oversupply of retail space. Land is awaiting a decision on a planning application for an extension to its 100,000-sq-ft shopping centre in York and aims to start construction next year. In Canterbury, Land has planning consent for its 400,000 sq ft Whitefriars retail scheme, with construction due to begin next year. Land's net rental income rose from £205 million to £211 million in the half. Adjusted earnings per share were 19.13p (17.74p). The 7.85p dividend is up 3 per cent.



Alistair Arkley, chief executive, left, and Barry Whitehead, finance director, announcing Century Inn's full-year profits

Century Inns shows 24% profit

ALISTAIR ARKLEY, chief executive of Century Inns, believes that being boring is a virtue in the current economic climate (Dominic Walsh writes). Unveiling a 24 per cent rise in full-year profits before tax

and exceptional to £105 million, Mr Arkley said: "I see us as being a good, solid and reliable business. We're not trying to do anything sexy." Century is busy investing the cashflow from its 400 tenancies in its Tap & Spile and

Country Inn managed pubs. Turnover jumped by 56 per cent to £53.1 million thanks to the purchase of 78 pubs from Pubmaster in July last year. Earnings per share reached 15.8p (15.1p) and a final payout of 5.3p makes 7.7p (7.4p).

Mr Arkley said: "We have a strategy that doesn't depend on acquisitions. We don't want to run around doing things and getting them wrong. It may sound boring but, in this time of uncertainty, being boring is perhaps a virtue."

Whitecroft in fresh restructure

Whitecroft, the industrial products company, is embarking on further restructuring. The company announced the £16.7 million sale of Chalmir, its hazardous area lighting business, and said it would withdraw from textile activities, resulting in a second-half exceptional charge of £7 million. Whitecroft reported a pre-tax interim loss of £7.69 million, against profits of £2.3 million previously. Operating profits before exceptional charges were £600,000 (£33 million). Adjusted losses were 1.8p a share (earnings of 3.7p). The interim dividend is held at 1.75p a share.

Porter warning

Porter Chabourn, the label manufacturer, yesterday reported an increase in interim profits, but gave warning that overcapacity in Britain and America continued to restrict sales growth. Pre-tax profits for the 26 weeks to September 25 were £2.8 million, up from £2.7 million in the previous first half, despite a drop in turnover to £38.2 million from £39.5 million. Earnings rose to 1.85p a share from 1.74p. The interim dividend is lifted to 0.315p (0.3p).

Greenway falls

Shares of Greenway Holdings fell 5p to a low of 26p after the oil recycling company reported a fall in pre-tax profits to £224,000 from £422,000 for the six months to September 30 and gave warning of a difficult outlook for the second half. Profits fell despite a 32 per cent rise in turnover to £9.9 million after the completion of two acquisitions. Earnings fell to 0.8p a share (1.49p) and the interim dividend is held at 0.5p a share.

Better Colour

European Colour, the manufacturer of chemical colours and coatings, yesterday reported a rise in interim pre-tax profits to £2.07 million from £1.79 million on turnover that increased to £15.75 million from £14.06 million for the six months to September 30. Earnings per share were 2.85p, up from 2.46p last time, and the interim dividend was 0.955p (0.865p).

Steel scheme

Redundant steelworkers will be offered the chance to retrain for other jobs under a scheme launched yesterday. Local authorities and training groups have joined forces with the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, the steel union, to create one of the biggest programmes of its kind.

Germany's 'wise men' cautious

By JANET BUSH, ECONOMICS EDITOR

GERMANY'S respected council of independent economic advisers yesterday sided with the Bundesbank and the European Central Bank against the Bonn Government on the contentious subject of interest rate policy.

In their quarterly economic report, the so-called five wise men said: "It would be fatal, if an irresponsibly expansive monetary policy led to higher capital market rates and became a source of insecurity."

They said that German economic growth would slow next year but that the country did not face deflation and would not fall victim to global recession. They predicted that European interest rates would converge to the current German level of 3.3 per cent.

Oskar Lafontaine, Germany's new Finance Minister, who has been campaigning loudly and publicly for a cut in European interest rates, said that there was room for lower interest rates given low inflation and that 3.3 per cent was "a good starting point" for the European Central Bank.

The wise men's report was sceptical about the growth-oriented policies and job creation priorities of the new administration, saying that more was needed than "good intentions and ambitious targets."

The best way to understand someone is to share the same view.



Telecommerce. No-one pays closer attention to their customers' needs than France Telecom. Take our new e-commerce service. Because we understand that online transaction security - confidentiality, authentication and authorization, from order to delivery - is your greatest concern, we developed Telecommerce. Find out more about Telecommerce from France Telecom: www.francetelecom.fr You'll find that the outlook for your business has never looked better.

Let's build a smarter world  France Telecom

THE TIMES

2 FOR 1 PORT OFFER



See Weekend on Saturday for full details

CHANGING TIMES

مكتبة من الأصل

Freem...
groups...
raised to...
Ap...
OVE...
Alan set for...
Pure Scandinavian.

Customised relations with the client

THE lack of internal communication within the marketing divisions of many large companies is remarkable, given recent advances in technology. Most people, for example, receive junk mail nearly every week advertising products that they have already told the seller they are not interested in buying.

In one recent case, a bank sent a promotional leaflet to a professional woman inviting her to apply for a gold credit card. On the same day, her husband received an invitation from the same company to apply for a platinum credit card. The accompanying promotional blurb boasting that "gold cards are just so passe". The bank may as well have asked them to sign up for a competitor's card.

This problem has led to the development of customer relationship management (CRM) software, the latest hot concept in the

information technology industry. In the UK, one of the fastest-growing CRM companies is Hation Blue, which recently secured £500,000 worth of venture capital funding from 3i. The company already has sales of £10 million, and is now looking for extra funding to move into the US.

The idea behind Veclius, Hation Blue's software product, is to bring together all the information about a customer stored within a company and put it in one easily accessible place. For example, this allows a telephone banking service to know everything about a customer when he or she phones up. It sounds obvious, but with customers now as likely to shop via the tel-

ephone, mail order, the Internet, and soon interactive television, it is getting increasingly difficult to keep track of what they are doing.

According to Paul Ratcliff, managing director of Hation Blue, CRM software allows companies to identify immediately big spending customers and target them accordingly. "It allows companies to act like new entrants to the market," he says. "They can just pick off the most profitable customers."

CRM software should help to put an end to the kind of marketing *faux pas* mentioned earlier. It also means that when a customer phones a company they feel as though the person on the other end of the line knows who they are,



and what they want. A customer who phones up a bank to pay a bill, and also wants to know how many repayments he or she has left on their personal loan with the same company, deserves to feel as

if they have received poor service if the information is not available immediately.

According to Hation Blue, there are many other advantages to using CRM software. If retailers or call centre employees know everything about their customers, they are much more likely to keep them. To take one example, they can make sure that all junk mail is relevant to them, and does not clash with products they have already bought.

It also improves opportunities for cross-selling. In the financial services sector, if a customer has already bought car insurance from a company, they may also be interested in buying home contents in-

urance, or even a mortgage. The same logic can be applied to nearly all sectors, in particular the mobile phone and utilities industries.

With companies such as the Bank of Scotland, AA Financial Services and Thomas Cook all using CRM software – and many using it as the main plank of their expansion strategies – it is likely the market for such software will explode. Not knowing everything about your customers when they contact you could soon become more of a fatal error rather than a minor gaffe.

□ HIGH streets look set to become more high-tech thanks to new deals between local author-

ties and the companies that sell advertising space in bus shelters and public toilets. As part of a recent deal in Boston, JC Decaux, the French advertising group, has agreed to build a network of interactive information kiosks around the city. The 24-hour kiosks will provide up-to-the-minute information on local services, restaurants, hotels and tourist services. Industry experts say similar deals could soon follow in the UK.

□ COMPANIES hoping to set up in Cambridge – described by *Newsweek* magazine as one of the world's "hottest tech cities" – will soon be offered up to 1.9 million sq ft of dedicated research and development property, according to the consultants FPD Savills. This will include Cambridge Research Park, Cambourne and Granta Park.

CHRIS AYRES

French drugs groups poised to merge

FROM ADAM SAGE IN PARIS

SANOFI and Synthelabo, the French pharmaceutical groups, are planning to merge, creating a company with a stock market value of about Fr155 billion (£16.5 billion).

Sources close to the companies said yesterday the merger was likely to be announced next month.

The move comes amid speculation that Rhône-Poulenc, France's biggest pharmaceutical company, is to merge with Germany's Hoechst.

Elf-Aquitaine, which holds a 54.4 per cent stake in Sanofi, will own about 36 per cent of the enlarged group. L'Oréal, which has a majority stake in Synthelabo, would have about 20 per cent of the shares.

The new group would have annual sales of about Fr35 billion and be well placed to boost profits that stood at Fr3 billion in 1997.

Analysts have expected the merger, with shares in Sanofi, France's second largest pharmaceutical group, and Synthelabo, the third largest, rising by 43 per cent each since the beginning of the year. Analysts said the move makes sense, given Sanofi's reputation for innovation and Synthelabo's distribution network. Neither company would comment yesterday.

The challenge for the new group will be to expand outside France, where both companies underperform. Sanofi had a 1997 turnover of Fr21.6 billion but less than 2 per cent of the US market. Synthelabo, with sales of Fr11.7 billion last year, is even weaker abroad.

Sanofi is also likely to sell off its Sanofi Beauty subsidiary, which markets Saint Laurent perfumes and Roger & Gallet soaps. Valued at about Fr6 billion, it had turnover of Fr4 billion in 1997.



Colour code: from left, Jean Chretien, Canada's Prime Minister, Al Gore, and Hong Kong's chief executive, Tung Chee-hwa, display Malaysian batik shirts

Apec's rescue plan papers over cracks at the summit

FROM A CORRESPONDENT IN CYBERJAYA, MALAYSIA

PACIFIC RIM leaders trumpeted an economic rescue plan for Asia yesterday after a week of talks marred by clashes over politics and trade.

The heads of the 21 members at the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (Apec) forum took aim at currency speculators and the harsh judgments of credit-rating agencies, reflecting the anguish of Asian economies sucked dry of capital. A declaration at the end of the two-day summit pledged relief for debt-laden corporations and banks, and stressed the need for growth by encouraging investment and capital inflows.

It envisaged stronger safety nets for populations lurching back into poverty and unemployment after decades of fast-paced growth. But it also pointed to signs of hope: more sta-

ble currencies; slowing inflation; lower debt; and trade surpluses in many Asian nations.

The statement, read by Mahathir Mohamad, the Malaysian Prime Minister, the summit's host, said: "We reaffirm our confidence in the strong economic fundamentals and prospects for recovery for the economies of the Asia-Pacific."

The declaration papered over wide cracks within the Apec forum which came to a head in an ugly clash between the United States and Malaysia after Al Gore, the US Vice-President, hailed "brave people" trying to topple the Mohamad Government with street protests. The Malaysian response described Mr Gore's comments as "disgusting" and "abhorrent".

Other Apec nations rebuked Mr Gore for mixing politics and business and making consensus on economic recovery harder.

Washington pressed Asian economies to respond to the crisis by opening their markets instead of bringing down the shutters, as Malaysia has done by imposing currency controls. Malaysia had demanded Apec support its calls for controls on international hedge funds and short-term capital flows it blames for the catastrophe which has overtaken the region.

The declaration broadly reflected both positions, but offered few specifics.

It said finance ministers should "formulate appropriate guidelines for monitoring capital flows," including short-term flows. And it called for a review of the practices of international credit-rating agencies.

Al Gore, the US Vice-President, sitting in for President Clinton, who stayed in Washington to deal with the Iraqi crisis, sported a rose-coloured version with a blue, green and white floral pattern. Mr Gore's shirt was quickly made after Mr Clinton cancelled his visit, officials said.

Jenny Shipley, New Zealand's Prime Minister, wore Malaysia's national dress, consisting of a long blouse over a sarong-like skirt.

clothing symbolic of the host country in a light-hearted show of unity during their annual summits.

Yesterday, several of the 21 leaders pointed to their shirts as they entered the Malaysian-style Cyberview Lodge, the site of their informal talks in a high-tech business park 25 miles outside Kuala Lumpur.

All were bright, with bold geometric or floral designs and different colours.

Colours lighten forum

IN A COLORFUL contrast to the stark economic crisis they were discussing, Pacific Rim leaders yesterday donned bold batik shirts hand-picked by Malaysia's Prime Minister.

"It's green and bright, like Kuala Lumpur sunshine," Goh Chok Tong, the Singapore Prime Minister, said of his shirt.

Tradition has it that leaders of the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum wear

ARRIVA, the transport group, has been given six months to divest its Lutonian Buses subsidiary after the Monopolies and Mergers Commission delivered a damning report into its fares policy in the town.

The MMC ruled that predatory pricing by Arriva had effectively forced Lutonian Buses to accept a takeover bid by Arriva.

Arriva, the country's third-largest operator of bus services, acquired Lutonian, which operates 19 minibuses in Luton, for £1.4 million. But in July the purchase was referred to the MMC.

Arriva said it did not agree with the MMC's conclusions and recommendations and was considering its position with legal advisers.

The MMC inquiry found Lutonian had provided effective

competition to Arriva's local service, known as Arriva the Shires, offering lower fares on routes not initially served by Arriva but overlapping with Arriva services on the main routes out of Luton town centre.

Arriva the Shires set up its own low-cost minibus operation, named Challenger, on exactly the same routes and timed to run shortly in front of Lutonian services and at lower fares.

Jurys close to finalising Doyle deal

BY DOMINIC WALSH

JURYS HOTEL GROUP is thought to be close to tying up a planned £180 million (£160 million) takeover of its privately owned Dublin rival, Doyle Hotel Group.

When the two sides revealed in September that they were in preliminary discussions, sources close to the negotiations indicated a likely exchange of contracts early in the new year. But with the due diligence all but completed, a deal is now expected to be signed in early December.

One insider said: "It's virtually a done deal. Both sides are keen to get cracking on this."

The acquisition, which is subject to shareholder approval, will allow Jurys to virtually double in size, creating a group with a total of 28 hotels and combined revenues of more than £130 million. Doyle's three hotels in Washington DC will take Jurys into the US for the first time. It also has seven hotels in Dublin, including the five-star Burlington, and the Clifton Ford in London's West End.

Analysts have welcomed the acquisition, pointing to the cost savings to be gained from closing the Doyle head office as well as significant economies of scale in areas such as purchasing and sales and

marketing. One said: "The only potential negative is the enlarged group's reliance on the Dublin market. But all the economic signs are positive and it's got some cracking properties there."

The group is being sold by the family of the late P. V. Doyle, who founded the business in 1961 and steadfastly defended its independence until his death in 1988.

The family is to take a significant amount of the sale price in Jurys stock, emerging with about 30 per cent of the combined group.

Three members of the family have been offered boardroom seats as non-executive directors of the company, which is to be renamed Jurys Doyle Hotel Group.

The sale will also allow David Doyle, the former managing director, to cash in his stake, worth an estimated £30 million. Mr Doyle left the group in 1997 after falling out with his sisters over the running of the company.

Some observers believe that the enlarged Jurys could attract the interest of the likes of Marriott, the US hotel business, which is known to have cast an eye over Doyle in the wake of the decision to scrap the planned flotation.

Cheaper electricity for Ulster

BY CHRISTINE BUCKLEY INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

NORTHERN IRELAND will get cheaper electricity by 2001 after yesterday's go-ahead for an interconnector between the province and Scotland.

Work on the power link, which will cost £150 million, will start next year and will enable Northern Ireland to import electricity from ScottishPower. Northern Irish customers pay about 20 per cent more for their power than those in Britain because of expensive contracts between Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) and the area's generators.

Harry McCracken, managing director of NIE, said: "The new agreement will bring competitively priced electricity into the Northern Ireland market and, in addition, will allow immediate access by large industrial customers to low-cost generation in Britain."

NIE will fund the bulk of the cost of the link although there will be a £60 million grant from the European Union and a £25 million contribution from ScottishPower.

Surprise fall in US trade gap

BY SAEED SHAH

THE United States enjoyed an unexpected narrowing in its September trade deficit, but President Clinton said that weakness in Asia remains a concern.

The US Commerce Department yesterday reported that, because of a near-doubling in civilian aircraft sales, the US goods and services shortfall in September declined to \$14 billion (£8.4 billion), from a revised \$15.9 billion in August. The September figure was far stronger than the \$16.2 billion deficit that analysts

However, for the first nine months of 1998, the shortfall grew to \$123.1 billion, from \$110.2 billion in that period of 1997. US officials say that, because of declining exports to Asia, 1998's deficit could reach \$220 billion to £240 billion.

Mr Clinton said: "Just as the world looked to us in America six years ago to put our economic house in order, today nations look to Japan to take decisive steps to help the Japanese people, to restore growth in Asia and around the world."

Azlan set for Internet

BY CHRIS AYRES

AZLAN, the technology distribution and training company, yesterday said it was to spend up to £3 million launching an Internet business, as part of its plan to "get value back" for its long-suffering shareholders.

The company, which is still being investigated by the Serious Fraud Office after a £30 million "black hole" was discovered in its accounts, said it

aimed to offer a comprehensive service over the Internet.

Azlan, which recently appointed its former finance director, Peter Bertram, as chief executive, distributes computer networking products built by US companies such as Cisco Systems and IBM to resellers in 12 different countries. The company now has a training division which helps its customers to learn how to use the products.

Azlan reported a loss for the six months to October 3 of just £100,000, compared with a first-half loss of £7.3 million last year. Shares in the company rose 34p to 474p, compared with a high of 287p in 1996.

The company also reported a 9 per cent rise in sales from £141 million to £154 million, while losses per share were cut from 14.2p to just 0.3p. No dividend will be paid for the year ending April 3, 1999.

MMC condemns Arriva

BY MATTHEW BARBOUR

ARRIVA, the transport group, has been given six months to divest its Lutonian Buses subsidiary after the Monopolies and Mergers Commission delivered a damning report into its fares policy in the town.

The MMC ruled that predatory pricing by Arriva had effectively forced Lutonian Buses to accept a takeover bid by Arriva.


Arriva, the country's third-largest operator of bus services, acquired Lutonian, which operates 19 minibuses in Luton, for £1.4 million. But in July the purchase was referred to the MMC.

Arriva said it did not agree with the MMC's conclusions and recommendations and was considering its position with legal advisers.


The MMC inquiry found Lutonian had provided effective

competition to Arriva's local service, known as Arriva the Shires, offering lower fares on routes not initially served by Arriva but overlapping with Arriva services on the main routes out of Luton town centre.

Arriva the Shires set up its own low-cost minibus operation, named Challenger, on exactly the same routes and timed to run shortly in front of Lutonian services and at lower fares.




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Scandinavian Airlines

Spanish telecoms company plans big job losses

FROM A CORRESPONDENT IN MAORID

TELEFONICA, the Spanish telecoms company, is to waive its dividend and cut thousands of jobs as part of a plan to cope with intense competition.

The company said yesterday it was setting aside 298 million pesetas (£1.27 billion) to finance a plan to shed staff. In the next two years the group is to cut 8,000 jobs in addition to 9,300 which were shed in 1998, a source close to the company said.

Telefonica expects that by the end of 2000 it will have cut its workforce by nearly 30 per cent to about 45,000 in Spain. The cuts would be achieved solely through early retirement from 53 years, and through redundancy payments for people who want to leave the company, the management said. But trade unions fear that people will be forced out of work and they have organised demonstrations in many big towns.

Telefonica, to improve presentation of the plan to employees, also announced that no dividend would be paid to shareholders this year. However, shareholders will receive a bonus share for 50 shares held as part of an increase of capital approved in June.

Juan Villalonga, company president, said that this year Telefonica will have invested a record amount of 1,750 billion pesetas on big acquisitions in Latin America and notably in Brazil, and on diversification in the media in Spain.

But Telefonica wants to reduce costs to cope with competition arising from liberalisation of the Spanish telecommunications market.

Many companies, in the fixed and mobile telephone business, have taken advantage of liberalisation to compete with Telefonica which has had to reduce its charges.

FKI advances 13% but gives downbeat view of prospects

BY ADAM JONES

FKI, the engineering, materials handling and hardware group, gave warning yesterday that it is becoming increasingly vulnerable to recession, despite a 13.5 per cent increase in interim profits.

The group, based in West Yorkshire, also said that it would consider buying back its own shares, which fell 84p yesterday to 130p, compared with a 12-month high of 227p. The fall followed the downbeat

assessment of FKI's markets. Bob Beeston, chief executive, said the downturn in various parts of the global economy had previously had little effect on trading.

He said that recession was now becoming more widespread. "This will inevitably have an impact on the markets in which we operate and makes accurate forecasting more difficult."

However, he insisted that FKI continued "to make progress against this difficult

and uncertain economic background".

Mr Beeston said there was a "noticeable slowdown" in the oil industry, hitting the performance of the engineering division, where sales fell from £200 million to £175.4 million.

The division also suffered from a reduction in demand for electric motors. Mr Beeston said increased orders for turbogenerators — a product of the deregulation of electricity generation in the US — helped to compensate for this.

Mr Beeston said that he was pleased with the integration of Bridon, the wire rope company bought last year. The operating margin at Bridon rose from 7.9 per cent from 5.2 per cent a year previously, with profits in the half year reaching £11.1 million.

Mr Beeston said: "That profit is probably as good as a full year." FKI will consider small acquisitions to augment Bridon's distribution network.

Overall, turnover in the six months to September 30 fell 2.5 per cent to £610.6 million. This comparison was affected by disposals during the year, particularly the sale of the automotive group last December. Sales from ongoing operations actually rose from £514.7 million to £586.9 million.

The profit before tax rose from £53 million to £72.6 million. Earnings per share rose from 5.95p to 8.3p. An interim dividend of 3.7p (3.2p) per share has been declared and will be paid on February 8.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

Avalon suspended as loans are cut off

SHARES of Avalon Oil were suspended at 6p yesterday after the independent exploration and production company said that its loan facilities had been withdrawn, leaving it in a "precarious" financial position. Avalon said that it was taking legal advice and that it believed the action was in breach of the relevant loan agreement. The action was in breach of the relevant loan agreement. Avalon's difficulties have been made worse by the current economic problems in Russia, which have paralysed the local banking system and made it impossible for Avalon to secure payments owed to it by Stimul, its joint venture partner in Russia. Avalon owns a 49 per cent stake in Stimul, a Russian joint stock company operating in Orenburg, southern Russia.

Earlier this month Avalon reported an interim operating loss of more than \$2 million (£1.21 million) for the six months to June 30, 1998. The company said that it had been affected by economic turmoil in Russia and falling oil prices, among other factors. Avalon shares, which trade on the Alternative Investment Market, peaked at 103 1/2p immediately after its flotation in April 1997.

Clyde Blowers offer

MANAGERS of Clyde Blowers are taking the specialist engineer private. Their £24.5 million offer for the company, announced yesterday, is worth 165p a share, a premium of 75 per cent to the price at which the shares traded before the bid approach was made public. Investors speaking for 42.8 per cent of the shares say that they intend to accept the offer. Shares of Clyde Blowers fell sharply after the company published disappointing half-year results in May this year and have failed to recover.

Brammer falls short

BRAMMER, the industrial services group, yesterday said it expects full-year profits to "fall short of the current market consensus", causing its share price to plunge. Shares fell 63p to 304p, before firming to close at 307 1/2p. The company said that for the four months since the half year, UK distribution sales are 5.6 per cent down on last year, with October down 10 per cent. Brammer also announced that it had acquired a 25 per cent stake in Sociedade de Rolamentos, a Portuguese bearing distributor, for £320,000 in cash.

Chase service retained

CHASE Global Investor Services, a subsidiary of Chase Manhattan, has been retained by the London Pensions Fund Authority after a review of custodial arrangements for investments totalling £2.4 billion. The LPFA is the successor body for the pension funds of the former Greater London Council and Inner London Education Authority. Chase originally retained by the LPFA in 1991, provides safekeeping of assets, multi-currency settlement and reporting, investment accounting and securities lending for the whole fund.

Ben Bailey fears

SHARES in Ben Bailey Construction fell sharply yesterday after the housebuilder said that its 1998 pre-tax profits would be below market expectations. Its share price touched a low of 52 1/2p, from 65p the previous day. Ben Bailey said that, assuming there is no change in the climate before year-end, full-year profits to December 31 "should still represent growth of approximately 25 per cent over 1997". The company expects to maintain the final dividend. It said that performance had been hurt by delays in the sales of its Sovereign homes.

Meyer sees bigger savings at Harcros

BY ROBERT COLE
CITY CORRESPONDENT

MEYER INTERNATIONAL, the Jewson builder's merchant company, expects to get greater integration benefits from its acquisition of rival Harcros than it first thought. The benefits are also likely to accrue more quickly.

When Meyer bought Harcros from Harrison & Crossfield in December for £305 million it said it expected to save £20 million from combined operating costs in three years. Yesterday it revised its estimate to £25 million in two years.

The integration of Harcros helped Meyer to increase profits by almost 50 per cent. The deal was part-funded by a rights issue which meant the growth in earnings per share was held back. However, earnings per share still grew 20 per cent in the half.

Operating profit margins, keenly watched by both the company and analysts, widened from 4.7 per cent to 6.4 per cent groupwide. In the UK, where most of the Harcros business is located, margins grew from 6.1 to 7.6 per cent.

Pre-tax profits were 62 per cent higher at £44.3 million for the six months to September 30. The interim dividend is 5p, up from 4.5p.

Tempus, page 32



Mixing it: Alan Peterson, left, the chief executive, and John Edwards, finance director

News Int nears Italy satellite TV deal

BY RAYMOND SNODDY
MEDIA EDITOR

NEWS International, the UK media group, is expected to complete today a move into the Italian satellite television market in partnership with Telecom Italia.

Once the deal is signed, the aim is to submit a £2.5 billion (£1.51 billion) bid for Italian television football rights for a five-year period tomorrow.

Rupert Murdoch, chairman and chief executive of The News Corporation, parent company of News International, which owns The Times, is particularly keen to get into the Italian satellite market, one of the most under-developed in Europe.

The deal envisages Telecom Italia having a 51 per cent stake in the enlarged Stream venture which would broadcast 200 digital channels, including pay-per-view football. News International would have a 39 per cent stake and TF1, the French broadcaster, would have the remaining 10 per cent. Stream would compete directly with Telepiu, the digital broadcaster that is controlled by Canal Plus, the French subscription operator.

BSkyB, in which News International has a 40 per cent stake, has decided against direct involvement in the Italian venture.

European Motors issues warning

BY MATTHEW BARBOUR

SHARES in European Motor Holdings fell 10p to 54 1/2p after the BMW, Mercedes and Jaguar dealer gave warning that full-year profits would fall short of expectations. The company yesterday re-

ported a fall in pre-tax profits to £5 million from £6.2 million for the six months to September 30 on turnover that fell to £233.8 million from £241.1 million. Earnings fell to 6.4p a share from 7.9p. The interim dividend is held at 2.6p a share.

Richard Palmer, chief executive, said trade had been adversely affected by weak consumer confidence, a change in the car registration system and high interest rates. As a result it was unlikely that full-year profits would match the £10.23 million reported for the

previous 12 months. The company announced that it was reviewing its operations with the aim of reducing costs. "When the economy turns, we hope to be in an excellent position to capitalise on any opportunities presented," Mr Palmer said.

Macdonald finds little evidence of downturn

BY DOMINIC WALSH

MACDONALD HOTELS, the provincial hotel operator, yesterday attacked economic commentators for "peddling strife and doom and gloom" as the group reported an 18 per cent jump in half-year profits.

Donald Macdonald, chief executive, said bookings for the key Christmas period were 4 to 5 per cent up on a year ago, adding: "As we sit here, we don't see much evidence of a downturn." He said the gloomy prognosis of many observers was "in danger of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy."

Pre-tax profits in the 26 weeks to September 27 rose from £5.56 million to £6.57 million after absorbing increased interest charges. Turnover was £28.4 million (£24.9 million). Earnings per share reached 8.4p (7.12p) and the interim payout rises to 1.82p (1.65p).

Average occupancy dipped to 66 per cent (67 per cent); a 9 per cent rise in the achieved room rate to £50.12 lifted the room yield 7 per cent to £33.11. Of the 25 hotels owned by Macdonald, 17 are four-star; it plans to upgrade six more from their current three-star standard. It is also in the process of adding to its 28 management contracts.

Asked if the group had received any approaches, Mr Macdonald said: "That's like asking a spinster that question. We would love to be courted but unfortunately we have not been." He denied implying that he was putting a "for sale" over the company, but added: "Shareholder value is what we focus on, not personal ego."

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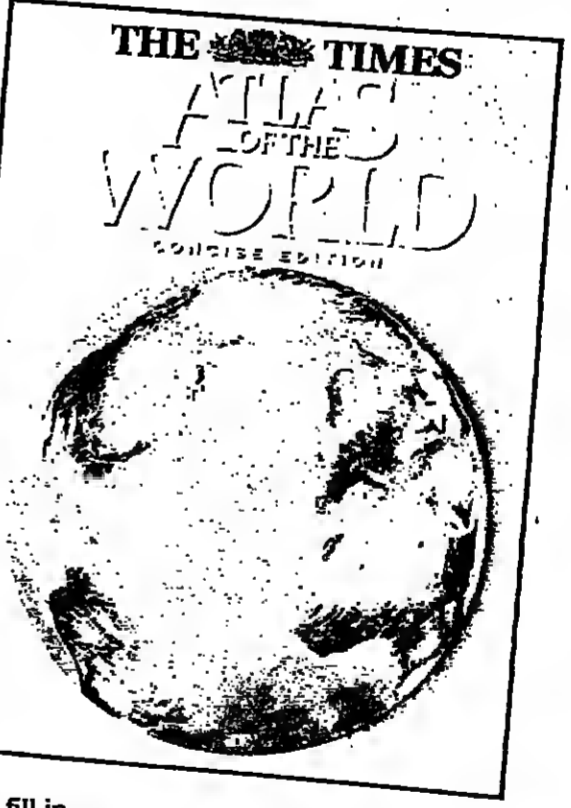
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ACCOUNTANCY

Revenue reform debate vital

John Avery Jones sees the need for a careful analysis of the proposals for a general anti-avoidance rule



John Avery Jones: "Taxpayers are put off by the state of the law"

Last month the Inland Revenue issued its long-awaited consultative document on a general anti-avoidance rule (GAAR) for direct taxes. Very properly this is a genuine and open consultation without any decisions having been taken already. I should like to examine the principle of such a statutory GAAR rather than the details of the proposals. The details are still recognisably those of the Tax Law Review Committee, which has not yet had an opportunity to consider the consultative document, but they have been tightened up. The policy case for a GAAR is that it is superior to the judge-made rules about avoidance in the first place when they started by construing tax legislation very formally last century. The judges invented an anti-avoidance doctrine in the 1980s that led to a much more realistic approach. Circular transactions were ignored completely, and so were inserted steps that had no real purpose apart from tax avoidance but the doctrine was not all-embracing. The doctrine has changed in the course of its evolution and may well change in the future. This approach creates uncertainty, is retrospective in its effect, and constitutes a rather surprising degree of judicial activity in an entirely statutory field like tax. How much better it would be if Parliament told the judges exactly what they should do, in a way that is not retrospective and is not capable of uncertain development in the future, especially if it is coupled with protection for taxpayers. I see considerable merit in these arguments, although they are rather spoilt, when one considers that the GAAR is to be restricted to companies, leaving the judges a free rein to continue to develop their doctrines for individuals and other classes of taxpayers, and, indeed, for companies as well. At present there is a fuzzy dividing line between whether a transaction is caught by the anti-avoidance doctrine or not because one never knows when the courts might change their approach. Under a GAAR there would be an even fuzziest dividing line, but in a different place. But there would be a clear line at the point at which one obtains a clearance. Because one can never define avoidance it is unthinkable that taxpayers should not be able to obtain clearances; they must still have the certainty that approved transactions are not caught. There would also be general clearances for some transactions in order for the Revenue to limit the number of applications for clearances. This clear dividing line would be a great advantage for taxpayers, at least so long as they are in a position to wait for the clearance, which is not

always possible in commercial transactions. At present most taxpayers do not go anywhere near the different but fuzzy present line because they are put off by the uncertain state of the law, the cost, not only in money but in management time, of fighting the Revenue, and the fear of upsetting the Revenue. There would be no

such concerns if the Revenue had blessed the transaction in advance. Might not a GAAR encourage all companies to avoid tax up to the new limits allowed by the clearance system? One might think that the Revenue's answer would be to be strict about giving clearances. But since it cannot afford to lose a case on the GAAR in court, at least in the early years of its existence, as its deterrent effect would be lost, it would actually have to be quite lenient about clearances. Looked at from the Revenue's point of view, the obvious advantage is that it would collect tax from transactions that it cannot tax at the moment. But the snag is that it would have to allocate say 100 (or it may be 200 for all I know) of its best people to man the clearance system when those people would be far better employed collecting tax. Might not the paradoxical result of a GAAR be more tax from the few but less tax from the many, coupled with the huge resource cost of running the clearance system? It is not therefore axiomatic that a GAAR is good for the Revenue and bad for taxpayers. This is an opportunity that must not be missed for a serious debate about the merits of GAAR. And please let us have an unemotional debate.

John Avery Jones is senior partner of Speechly Bircham and chairman of the Tax Law Review Committee

Human rights to keep 'the tax police' at bay

IT MAY seem far from home. But attitudes in Kazakhstan bring the latest legal changes and how they will affect taxation into sharp resolution. Stephen Oliver, the great and amiable president of the VAT Tribunals, was hauled out there to try to intervene and explain the concept of human rights to what is known in Kazakhstan as "the tax police". These people described by Oliver as "looking like gentlemen who had come in with Genghis Khan" were much given to kicking down the doors of oil executives and carrying them off to the cells for 48 hours of questioning on the precise nature of transfer pricing. Oliver is a persuasive soul. But even he failed to make a lasting change. As one member of the tax police apparently told him: "We will still find it better to kick the

human rights to keep 'the tax police' at bay. It is this concept of certainty that is going to crop up again and again as lawyers connect the effect of the new human rights legislation with issues of justice for taxpayers. "Every natural or legal person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions," says Article 1 of the First Protocol of the European Convention on Human Rights, and that principle is, as of last week, no longer a distant idea wrangled over in Strasbourg. It is now at the heart of UK law. As Francis Fitzpatrick, the barrister, put it at this week's conference, the idea of retrospective legislation, for example, will be seen as "particularly offensive" as it cuts away at the idea of certainty. It is not necessarily a breach of the Act but is viewed with considerable suspicion. As is the idea of prospective legislation. In future Chancellors of the Exchequer may find that floating ideas for the future via a Green Budget, for example, ends up engulfed in the courts on the grounds that it undermines legal certainty and the rule of law. The same goes for areas such as the recovery of overpaid tax and any Revenue policy of prosecution that is selective rather than universal. Ordinary citizens will be able to take to the courts to ensure that the tax authorities apply policies consistently and give the taxpayer certainty. None of this will make the tax gatherers' job any easier. They may agree wholeheartedly with the Lord Chancellor who characterised human rights law in 1950 as "some half-baked scheme to be administered by some unknown court". But for the rest of us it curbs the concept of "the tax police". No threat to our "peaceful enjoyment" will go unchallenged.



ROBERT BRUCE

But times change. This country, as of last Thursday, has the Human Rights Act 1998 in force. And, to judge by the views expressed at a conference organised this week by TaxAid, the tax advice charity, it will have a profound effect on tax matters. It may even come to the aid of some of the concerns that Peter Wyman, the prominent tax partner with PricewaterhouseCoopers, voiced in last week's Philip Hardman memorial lecture. Wyman was keen to argue that uncertainty over disclosure requirements for tax returns put taxpayers in a grossly unfair position. He suggested that Hardman, the indignant Grant Thornton tax partner in whose memory the annual lecture is held, "would have been appalled at what appears to be the prevailing attitude in some quarters of the Treasury, the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise to the effect that in order to protect the Exchequer from tax avoidance any means are justified even where ordinary people doing ordinary things are severely disadvantaged". Wyman's underlying theme was that "there needs to be a clear, and probably binding, accord on what constitutes proper disclosure". That would seem to be an unarguable right. But the tax authorities have always kept such areas deliberately con-

cluded. It obviously suits their efforts to do so. But equally some of the examples that Wyman put forward could have seemed, to an ordinary onlooker, to be examples of taxpayers wanting to have their cake and eat it. Wyman's thesis was damaged by this. But his fundamental points still stood. "One aspect of certainty," he argued, "is knowing that once a tax return or computation has been agreed the resultant tax liability is determined for all time. The taxpayer therefore knows what he is due to pay and that is the end of the matter. However, if as a matter of almost routine, the position can then be reopened on 'discovery' that degree of certainty has gone and taxpayers are placed in an intolerable position."

What goes round comes round

THE proposed move of the £7 million audit of the Abbey National plus of the Abbey National audit from PricewaterhouseCoopers to Deloitte & Touche has more than a touch of symmetry, some might even say Schadenfreude, about it. For years the audit of the Abbey National was carried out by the original Deloitte firm. But mergers came along. Around the world Deloitte merged with Touche Ross and became Deloitte & Touche. But in the UK the old firm

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

merged with Coopers, and the Abbey audit went along as well. But things did not go well. The mixing of Deloitte partners and Coopers partners turned into an acrimonious affair. Many Deloitte partners jumped, or were pushed. One such was Keith Woodley, a distinguished partner who was also one-time president of the English ICA. These days he finds himself chairman of the audit committee at

Abbey National. How pleasant, he must be thinking, to have been able to deliver the audit to the firm that now bears the Deloitte name. Focused group THEY don't make chartered accountants like they used to. The annual Hardman memorial lecture is always a time not only to deliver analytical thoughts on the subject of tax, but also to tell tales of the legendary Philip Hardman, of

Grant Thornton, whose memory is celebrated by the event. This year's lecture was given by Peter Wyman, tax partner with PricewaterhouseCoopers. Halfway through the event he startled the assembled hundreds by blowing a whistle as an aid to refocusing his audience's attention. Hardman, he recalled, had once adopted the same strategy. Except that he had used a gun and loosed it off at the ceiling.

Pathological

THE Treasury, in its enthusiasm for swingeing laws against tax avoidance, is prone to being infuriated by the habit of tax advisers of picking over the old bones of the law in an effort to find a loophole. Their suspicions can only be confirmed by a conference to be held at the end of the month. Entitled "Sophisticated Offshore Tax Planning Now", the afternoon seminar is to be held, significantly enough, at the Royal College of Pathologists.

ROBERT BRUCE



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Gilts advance as equities fade

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ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Table with 4 columns: High, Low, Company, Price. Includes stocks like 15180, 15181, 15182.

BANKS

Table with 4 columns: High, Low, Company, Price. Includes stocks like 15183, 15184, 15185.

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Table with 4 columns: High, Low, Company, Price. Includes stocks like 15186, 15187, 15188.

DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS

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INVESTMENT TRUSTS

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LEISURE & HOTELS

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Other Financial

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Support Services

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Printing & Paper

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Large advertisement for 'SALE' with 'SHARES TODAY' and '677-2300'. Includes 'GOLDEN AGE' logo.

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Engineering

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Support Services

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NEW VIDEOS
Boorman's *The General* hits the small screen
PAGE 42

THE TIMES ARTS

POP
Pulp, back on form and back on the road
PAGE 43



NEW MOVIES: Geoff Brown peers through the pretentious fug surrounding *Ronin* to discover... not very much

De Niro up a bland alley

Ominous characters are brought together in Paris by a brisk young lady with an Irish accent. A deadly mission is afoot. "There are some people," Natascha McElhone says, "who have something that we require." Who is we? What people? And what is the something? Mum's the word in *Ronin*, an action thriller that tries to cloak its old-fashioned ingredients in a cloud of enigma. All we are initially told is that the people are "very unpleasant", and that the something is contained in a silver case, closely guarded. As a call to arms this would not satisfy me, but it suits the task force, six in number and all perfect strangers. Robert De Niro, a shady American, arrives on the job in a peaked cap and a rain-soaked mac. Shady Frenchman Jean Reno prefers stubble and a woolly cap. Stellan Skarsgård, an electronics whiz from the old Eastern bloc, skulks in the background. Sean Bean, a weapons adviser, exits early after being throttled by De Niro. Once money has been talked, the remainder set off, guns loaded, car with a full tank, ready for heavy-duty action under the direction of John Frankenheimer.



Caught up in an enigma with precious few variations, Robert De Niro tries to shoot himself out of the trouble that John Frankenheimer has landed him in, in the thriller *Ronin*

There have been few chances for him to whip up a good chase since *The French Connection II*, 23 years ago. But he makes amends here. After a dust-up on the banks of the Seine, pursuers and pursued shift to the Riviera. Cars roar down narrow Nice streets. Back in Paris, vehicles collide in the sort of tunnel where Diana, Princess of Wales, met her fate. Aside from that sequence's unwelcome overtones, action scenes are dilligently handled and pleasant enough, with squealing tyres, bursting flames; you know the sort of stuff.

In practice, De Niro and company carry no symbolic weight. They are just sketchily developed types who run around France without enough reason, trying to snatch a silver case from the Russian Mafia. With a stronger script, the actors could take their characters to interesting places, but they remain tied down to the shallow thoughts compiled by J.D. Zilk and a pseudonymous David Mamet.

A lack of fresh excitement also dogs *Les Misérables*. This is "Les Mis" without the music: expensive plans to film Cameron Mackintosh's hit musical, first mooted a decade ago, remain unfulfilled. But no one needs to pay Victor Hugo for his novel, so the way was clear for Mandalay Entertainment to wheel out Valjean, the wronged convict seeking redemption; Javert, the police inspector who refuses to let bygones be bygones; and the rest of the characters culled from the book's 1,200 pages by screenwriter Rafael Yglesias.

Roman Polanski launched the project (filmed largely in Prague). Then, when he shuffled off elsewhere, Billie August came in to direct a cast including Liam Neeson, Geoffrey Rush, Uma Thurman, Claire Danes, massed Czech extras and that waddling flock of geese without whom no movie village appears complete. As an international, English-language venture, *Les Misérables* is certainly more sensible than either *The House of the Spirits* or *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, although it never hits the artistic heights.

Neeson, oddly, is one of the disappointments. He has no trouble conveying Valjean's looming presence, but the flames of injustice that burn within too often produce a pained look that suggests only indignation. So the way is clear for Rush to dominate with his sly and persistent Javert: no straightforward ogre, this, but a man eating himself up with revenge, as much a haunted loner as Valjean, his prey. Thurman (as the ill-fated Fantine) copes well with the unfamiliar task of looking bedraggled and miserable. Claire Danes (her adolescent daughter Cosette) hardly suits 19th-century France, but modern young audiences should cheer her secret love affair with the student Marius that rounds off the last few reels.

Nowhere, though, in this dutiful amalgam of scenes and images is there any creative audacity. For that, you must visit *The Fountainhead*, 50 years old and a film rather easier to appreciate now than it seemed in 1948. Then, critics poured scorn on the verities floating from the mouths of Gary Cooper, Raymond Massey and Patricia Neal, the visionary architect, newspaper tycoon and prickly heiress locked in a tussle between individualism and the collective will. Now the excesses of Ayn Rand's story and dialogue take their place in a film pitched throughout at a level of stately delirium.

Consider the visuals, master-minded by the director, King Vidor. Every skyscraper becomes a phallic symbol, every encounter a sexual ballet played out in grandiose offices and bedrooms. But *The Fountainhead* is not just stylistic hot air. It also fascinates because a real architect, the imperious Frank Lloyd Wright, lay behind the Cooper character, and both the interior sets and building projects were deliberately designed as Wright pastiches. *The Fountainhead* fancifully assumed that architectural matters could stir a wide public to frenzy. It did not in 1948, nor does it now, but all the debates over form and function certainly add extra interest to this bizarre film.

Ronin
Odeon Leicester Square
15, 121 mins
Old-fashioned action thrills with Robert De Niro
Les Misérables
Odeon West End
12, 134 mins
Lots of Victor Hugo, but no music
The Fountainhead
Curzon Soho
PG, 114 mins
Hollywood madness revisited

Rounders
Warner West End
15, 118 mins
Matt Damon plays poker and loses
The Eel
Curzon Soho, 18, 117 mins
Interesting film from Japan's Shohei Imamura
Angel Sharks
ABC Swiss Centre
15, 90 mins
Itchy film about restless teenagers on the Riviera
Dead Man's Curve
Metro, 15, 86 mins
Moderate horror movie

But Damon's Mike is just a dull sap, pushed and pulled by those around: not someone you take to heart. For Dahl, too, this is a disappointing venture: the widescreen imagery may be alluring, but he seems to have mislaid the bite of his earlier thrillers.

The *Eel* is a wayward film by the Japanese veteran Shohei Imamura. A man (Koji Yashuta, from *Shall We Dance?*) is paroled after serving time for stabbing his wife. He runs a barber shop; he talks to his pet eel. Imamura, an astute observer of the Japanese scene, creates a humane portrait of the community clustered round the shop, although he puts the film in jeopardy with awkward injections of melodrama and farcical comedy. Surprisingly, the film shared the Palme d'Or at Cannes last year.

The New Thriller from the Director of 'The Last Seduction'

MATT DAMON EDWARD NORTON

"Rounders marks a return to form for director John Dahl... poised, polished... a joy to behold" - THE INDEPENDENT

JOHN TURTURRO FANKE JANSSEN GRETCHEN MOL WITH JOHN MALKOVICH AND MARTIN LANDAU

ROUNDERS

FROM TOMORROW AT CINEMAS NATIONWIDE

With *Rounders*, the latest from director John Dahl, most of the interest lies in the background details: from the seedy New York bars where law student Matt Damon obsessively plays poker, to the supporting characters that seem so much livelier than Damon himself. "Want a cookie?" John Malkovich asks, disguised as a Russian cardshark. Edward Norton sparks further interest as Damon's friend Worm, whose reckless gambling leaves them both with impossible debts.

Nowhere, though, in this dutiful amalgam of scenes and images is there any creative audacity. For that, you must visit *The Fountainhead*, 50 years old and a film rather easier to appreciate now than it seemed in 1948. Then, critics poured scorn on the verities floating from the mouths of Gary Cooper, Raymond Massey and Patricia Neal, the visionary architect, newspaper tycoon and prickly heiress locked in a tussle between individualism and the collective will. Now the excesses of Ayn Rand's story and dialogue take their place in a film pitched throughout at a level of stately delirium.

'Nice car chases'

Every week, young film fans discuss the latest releases...

RONIN
Charlotte Dailey, 19: Nice car chases, but very little else to recommend it. Natascha McElhone was the film's only saving grace.
Leslie Isaiah Thomas, 20: If action is your thing, this is for you. If you prefer slow and thoughtful, stay away.
Carl Clark, 19: An enthralling piece of nonsense. Some of the best action sequences I've seen.
Alison Juliard, 20: If I'd seen just one more car chase, I'd have screamed.

ROUNDERS
Charlotte: Easily the best film released this week. Edge-of-the-seat stuff.
Leslie: Enjoyable, but lacking in tension.
Carl: Matt Damon was excellent. He portrayed the life of a gambler really well.

SNAP VERDICT

Alison: All the actors are electrifying.
LES MISÉRABLES
Charlotte: It will make you feel depressed, perhaps because it's a little too true to the novel.
Leslie: An old-fashioned kind of movie that will probably be appreciated by the more mature cinemagoer. Not a patch on the musical.
Carl: I thought it was dull and sombre. Desperately in need of some songs.
Alison: It just didn't work, which was a shame because the actors were all brilliant.

EVERYBODY LOVES JOE!

"TAKE THAT HOLLYWOOD, RIGHT IN THE BALLS!"
Eagles
"SUPERB"
Time Out

A film directed by Ken Loach

My name is Joe

"EXCEPTIONAL"
The Guardian
"MAGNIFICENT"
The Independent On Sunday
"WONDERFUL"
The Express

"RIVETING"
The Independent
"All other British cinema this year just seems like candyfloss"
The Times

Now Showing

ABC
RITZY
And Scotland

Starts tomorrow

CHELSEA CINEMA
And across the country

مكتبة من الأصل

Russian
The Storm
Bobbing for
K
Surprise and tha

Russians in a fine rage

There you are, a nice young woman roaming Robin Don's s.t. which oddly but enterprisingly combines a rough timber walkway with the durne of an old Russian church. In glides a lady in furs and silks, accompanied by footmen. And does this genteel stranger give you a friendly greeting? No, she instantly tells you to forget all pleasure because "there is an endless eternal fire and you will burn in it". And off she shimmers, smiling the serene smile of the justified.

Welcome to Kalinovo, Ostrovsky's capsule version of the towns he visited on a field-trip down the Volga in 1826. It is a

THEATRE The Storm Almeida

place where tradition is so oppressive, a sort of home-grown Calvinism so ingrained, fatalism so absolute, the distance between rich and poor so extreme, that the plays of Ibsen, who began writing about the same time, seem cheerful by comparison and those of Chekhov positively larky.

The ecology of such places is, of course, friendly to tyrants of both the economic and moral varieties; and Ostrovsky gives us one of each. The merchant Dikoi (bug-eyed, bushy-bearded Sylvester Morand) is a bully, forever raging at some down-trodden workman or maybe his nephew Boris (Richard Lynch), who is hopelessly awaiting a legacy his grandmother left him. And Kabanova (Maggie Steed) is a merchant's widow and a mother-in-law beyond the power of even Bernard Manning to vilify. If her son Tikhon (Paul Hilton) fails to honour her enough, or refuses to treat his wife Katya (Susan Lynch) with sufficient contempt, she takes it as proof that God's cosmos is being dismantled by the younger generation.

Ostrovsky's way of giving this static situation a dramatic shake-up is a bit predictable. While Tikhon gratefully escapes on a boozy business trip, Katya and Boris succumb romantically and (it seems) even physically to each other. But what follows is more striking. Katya is enough of a Kalinovan not just to launch into denuded confessions of guilt and distraught monologues la-



Adultery ahead: Paul Hilton (Tikhon) and Susan Lynch (Katya) as the husband and wife in trouble in *The Storm*

menting the fact that Russians no longer execute adulteresses, but — well, I must not reveal a denouement which those with a taste for grim Volgan endings should re-
Actually, I would recommend a visit to Hettie Macdonald's staging in spite of everything: the melodrama, the thin love-plot, the symbolic thun-

derclaps, the improbably decent *raisonneur* who keeps interjecting editorialising remarks about the joylessness of provincial Russia. Though Lynch catches Katya's dreamy vulnerability, her despair lacks harshness and depth, and though Maggie Steed looks and sounds baleful, a hint of Widow Twankey under-

mines her menace. But thanks largely to Frank McGuinness's robust translation, you cannot miss Ostrovsky's generosity of spirit or the size of his indignation.
Forty years after the piece's premiere, British dramatists were still damning women who rebelled against the day's sexual orthodoxes. Ostrovsky

prefers to blame a time and place that traps all the characters, good and bad, and he does so with a whole-heartedness that still seems refreshing. If there is an angrier play than *The Storm*, in any language, send me its name.

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE

Surfeit of saccharin

Compilation shows are not my favourite cup of nostalgia, but if the songs really meant something to me first one round then Proust's madeleine effect starts to operate, and that gives a good feeling for a time. Otherwise there's enjoyment when the lyrics come leech with wit and verbal complexity. But the prospect of a string of songs knitted together from a string of shows, like this one from the musicals of Jerry Herman, promises a tepid evening and generally delivers it.

If happy days were tied up for me with memories of *Hello, Dolly!* or *Mame* with *Mack and Mabel* or *La Cage aux Folles*, for all of which Herman wrote music and lyrics, these 43 numbers, at just under three minutes per song, might have turned the time lost listening to them into time well spent. Led by the strong-voiced Kathryn Evans, the six singers, one of them also the pianist, can be likeable enough, and in the sadly few songs where the tone is tart it is pleasant to hear disgruntlement set to rhyme.

But the prevailing tone is remorselessly optimistic. Amazingly, nobody actually calls upon us in so many words to Look Upon The Bright Side, but this is the mood conveyed by the great preponderance of the ditties. Early on we are



The Best of Times Vaudeville

told we should whistle when we feel no one is near, that a touch of mascara can help us to cope again, there's hope again, that we should tap our troubles away, that as long as we are dancing the world will dance along. On it goes. The pianist promises us a happy ending, and when it comes, with a dash of "Ma-ame!" a splash of "Hello-o-o-o, Dolly!" hint lights chase each other around the arches like bright mice.
Obviously there's nothing actually wrong with this atti-

tude to the speck of earth we call home, and most American musicals include a song where somebody down on his luck pulls himself up by his bootstraps and behold, the straps are made of gold. But in quantity it's just too sweet and creamy.

A relief therefore to watch Garth Bardsley lean against a silver crescent and confide that the man in the moon is a lady — "The cow who jumped over cried 'Jumping Jehovah!'" — or hear Lindsay Hamilton give us Jeanette MacDonald's revenge on boring old Nelson Eddy. There is garlic in the cream, hooray.

JEREMY KINGSTON

Stylish spot of delusion

Twelfth Night Sheffield Crucible

wallows in lute music and indulges in homoerotic flamenco with his servants.

Shipwrecked on Christopher Oram's expensive-looking floorboards, *Susannah Hitching's* Viola promptly falls for this inflated ego. But disguised as a man, Cesario, and sent to woo on Orsino's behalf, she inadvertently wins Olivia for herself. If anything, Hermione Gulliford's Olivia wears her resistance too lightly. Viola's dig, "Lady, you are the cruellest sea alive," sounds almost gratuitous after her alter-ego has just skewered Olivia's heart on the

chaise longue. Hitching's performance, however, is as much a gem as Sinclair's Malvolio.

It's left to Jeremy Clyde's bibulous Toby Belch and Una Stubbs's housekeeper Maria to hammer in the comic rivets. There's something distinctly odd about watching two middle-aged actors acting like unreconstructed Oxbridge students. But it works. For sheer comic opportunism, Clyde's louche playboy leaves Nicholas Rowe's addled Ageuechek blinking in the stalls. I never realised what a show-stealing part this is. Similarly Stubbs, with her pert little poses and Mary Poppins chortle, brings a whole new meaning to blue-stocking housekeeper.

It is Ian Bartholomew's clown Feste who sounds the most melancholic notes. Bald and baggy in a giant green bath towel, he pads about like a medieval jester with insouciantly jocular characters with inscrutable jokes. That it all seems to make perfect sense is perhaps the grandest illusion of all.

JAMES CHRISTOPHER

Bobbing for Irish apples

Belfast these days has two new tower blocks from which to view the city's expansion into the distant hills of Antrim. With the logo of a telephone company and an American hotel chain high on its smoky skyline, the city seems set for the economic mainstream.

This year's Belfast Festival displays similar high-flying aspirations, with its *Big Apple-First Bites* programme featuring work from a long list of New Yorkers, including Trisha Brown, Bill Viola, David Byrne, Robert Wilson and Philip Glass.
Big Apple-First Bites provided the extraordinary opportunity to see Saratoga International Theatre Institute's *Bob* alongside a lecture from Wilson that amounted to a "real-life" version of the stage show. The one-man show *Bob* was created from a series of interviews in which director and stage artist Wilson expounds his views on art, life and America. STI director Anne Bogart, together with performer Will Bond, have created something, however, that leaves pedagogy far behind. Their brand of theatre involves a kind of slow-motion dance without music, marrying sound, light, voice and body work to give an absorbing account of even Wilson's most rarefied ideas.

So when Wilson himself strolled on to the stage of the Lyric to lead his audience through *An Evening With Robert Wilson*, he had the unenviable job of living up to Bond's version of him. Where Wilson's charisma is slightly frightening, Bond's is wholly seductive. Bond is also, oddly enough, better at speaking about Wilson's work than the man himself, even though what he has to say is confined entirely to the director's words.

But Bond offers something more substantial than an avant-garde Rory Brem-

er. His performance seems almost to work against Wilson's creed of keeping things slow and dightly focused. While Bond speaks, in Wilson's words, about moving at a snail's pace in order to experience more, his own work rate leaves sweat cascading from his cropped scalp.
David Pownall's latest, *Getting the Picture* (Lyric), might have benefited greatly

BELFAST FESTIVAL

from a Robert Wilson setting. Pownall's is a fascinating script, sharply prodding notions of image and reality, history and myth. Unfortunately this too often flat-footed production, directed by Eoin O'Callaghan and designed by Will Hargreaves, seems to take entirely the wrong tack. Andrew Jackson, the seventh President of the United States, had his roots in the Ulster town of Carrickfergus. As such, it seemed reasonable to members of the Irish freedom movement that he should support their cause. Over many years, however, Jackson refused. Pownall's play concerns the efforts of an Irish woman, Sorcha Kinlock (Jasmine Russell), finally to convince the dying ex-President, now retired to his slave-worked plantation, that he has a duty to the old country.

Kinlock arrives at Jackson's estate at the same time as Mathew Brady, a photographer who has come to take what he expects to be the final photograph of Jackson. Through this fortunate conglomeration, Pownall gets at the precarious business of image-making in the figurative and literal sense. But while the text offers a shifting pattern of truth and fiction, idealism and pragma-

tism, the production entirely lacks the finesse to make the best of it, offering lumpy settings and heavy-handed projection effects where something far less explicit was certainly called for.

Performances, however, help to compensate for the unsympathetic setting. Russell is taut and efficient as the gamine Irish patriot, while Mical McBrian's painfully self-confident Brady is equally precise. Chris Crooks offers a commanding centre to the piece. Full of wrath stymied only by flagging energy levels, his Jackson, while distinctly unlikeable, is entirely convincing as a character hard and vain enough to dent history.

A lesson in Irish drama as well as Irish history is on offer in *Field Day* and *Tinderbox* theatre companies' new version of Stewart Parker's *Northern Star*, staged in the resonant Belfast location of the First Presbyterian Church. Parker's play tells the story of the United Irishmen's leader Henry Joy McCracken by plundering and lampooning the entire history of Irish drama from Farquhar to Wilde and Behan. A day out in the Antrim hills is morphed into a wander through the Ireland of John Millington Synge, while McCracken's comic encounter with a bedraggled peasant is conducted in the stilted Hiberno-English pidgin of Boucoucal's *Collen Bawn*.

The humour of Parker's ideas has not always emerged as clearly as it does under Stephen Rea's fluid but focused direction. An excellent cast moves agilely around both church and text, while Conch Hill manages to suggest some of McCracken's charisma even as the doomed hero frets himself inexorably towards the gallows.

LUKE CLANCY

Surprise, surprise and thank you

RADIO

ideas which seek to explain our behaviour in all manner of activities. But sometimes the best bits are brief interviews with people who have contacted the programme.

Thus we heard on Sunday from Jeff Howell, a writer who used to be in the building trade, though clearly not the sort of builder who will start the job three months next Wednesday and finish it soon after your grandchildren have inherited the property, weather permitting. Howell is a gem. He has done research, written learned papers. He said that those doggy characters who come around pressing meters up against your

walls to prove that damp is racing upwards are likely to be talking, er, rot.

The meters do not measure damp, they measure electrical activity. Given that water conducts electricity very well, the presumption is that a high reading must mean a lot of water. But it ain't necessarily so, because the chances of a damp-proof course having failed are about as good as the chances of the entire *Today* programme being given over to a discussion of Peter Mandelson's sexuality.

End of OIY advice, but sur-

prises continue. Just when you thought the Prison Service was getting to grips with its problems, along comes an excellent documentary series that suggests there is still some way to go. *Managing Life* (Radio 4, Mondays) is the product of several months spent by Ed Stark getting to know the inmates of Glenochil Jail in Scotland. All the prisoners interviewed are serving life sentences for murder.

The surprise here was ordinariness and vulnerability. These men are mostly first-time offenders with no knowledge or understanding of the criminal milieu in which they find themselves. We heard from inmates struggling with remorse who dare not show their feelings for fear of appearing weak. Informative, interesting, surprising. More please.

PETER BARNARD

"STYLISH AND ENGROSSING"
"EXQUISITELY ACTED" "FIRST RATE"
"THE MOST STUNNING PRODUCTION TO DATE OF THIS CLASSIC EPIC"
"★★★★★ STORMING... A MUST SEE FILM"
LIAM NEESON
GEOFFREY RUSH UMA THURMAN CLAIRE DANES
The classic story of conscience, conviction and courage.
LES MISERABLES
THE LEGEND COMES TO LIFE.
AT CINEMAS NATIONWIDE FROM TOMORROW

11 NOVEMBER 19 1998
not very much
RYBODY LOVES JE
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MAY BE FALLS
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EXCEPT
WAGNER
WONDER
Showing

LISTINGS

Last bow for Hall and Co?

ARTS

NEW CLASSICAL CDS
Schnittke discoveries

Lid off the Irish underworld

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Guide to arts and entertainment compiled by Marti Hargie

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LONDON PHILHARMONIC: Kurt Masur, the orchestra's dynamic principal conductor...



Kurt Masur leads the LPO at the Festival Hall

CHOIR OF CLARE COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE: Past and present members of the chapel choir team up with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment...

SUPPLIANTS: James Kerr directs his new version of Aeschylus's drama of the daughters of Danaos...

ELSEWHERE: HUDDERSFIELD: A play by Lucas forms the basis for Simon Holt's new opera...

NEW WEST END SHOWS

Jenny Kingston's choice of theatre shows in London

- THE BEST OF TIMES: The Bridwell Theatre's programme of Jerry Herman songs...
MY BOY: Tom Court in John Dowd's short comedy play...

FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE

Geoff Brown's choice of the latest movies

- BLADE (18): Extravagant, jumbled horror fantasy...
FEAR AND LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS (18): Terry Gilliam's idiosyncratic and wearisome version...

NEW ON VIDEO

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BOOKS

Kneeling before an ever clever guide to culture

In the preface to this manifesto of high culture, Roger Scruton lays down strict criteria for aspiring readers of the book. "You don't have to be familiar with the entire canon of Western literature" and "the full range of artistic masterpieces", he writes, but you should have at least "some familiarity" with T. S. Eliot, Baudelaire, Mozart, Wagner, Monet, Poussin, Tennyson, Schopenhauer, George Herbert, Goethe, Marx, Nietzsche, and Derrida. Please sir, will there be a quiz?

ELAINE SHOWALTER
AN INTELLIGENT PERSON'S GUIDE TO MODERN CULTURE
By Roger Scruton
Duckworth, £14.95
ISBN 0 7156 2870 4

ROGER SCRUTON
AN INTELLIGENT PERSON'S GUIDE TO MODERN CULTURE

Ending as his caveat may prove to potential buyers who will regard the display of the *Guide* as a status symbol or babe-magnet, Scruton's thesis is even sterner. "It is my view," he declares, "that the high culture of our civilisation contains knowledge... far more significant than anything... from the channels of popular communication." Culture is profoundly religious; literature has its sacred texts and the function of art is to "enable the human spirit".

Scruton pursues his thesis through chapters on the Enlightenment, Romanticism, fantasy, Modernism, avant-garde and kitsch, youth culture, intellectuals and deconstruction. He concludes with an attack on literary theory and a hope that "the ethical life may still be retrieved".

Along the way he denounces the posturing and sentimentalism of Victorian poetry in general and Tennyson in particular. He enthrones the "modernist severity" of T. S. Eliot. And he deplores the "institutionalised flippancy" of Damien Hirst, Oasis, All Saints, Foucault, and all the Post-Modernists and -isms "who thrive in humanities departments". To Scruton, they are all naysayers and nihilists, who deny the transcendence of great art, and specialise in a "theory of repudiation", that is becoming the "official culture of the Post-Modern university".

Scruton is at his philosophical best when he is demonstrating that Derridean deconstruction belongs to the Devil's party. He's taking on a priestly role himself when he argues that art demands and creates

Dark side of a life in pictures

Feared and envied in equal measure, the genius of Caravaggio was threatened by his violent personality, says Peter Ackroyd

Because he had a dark complexion, complete with black deep-set eyes, "this colouring was naturally reflected" in the vivid chiaroscuro of his paintings. So a 17th-century art critic surmised. Because he painted young boys and athletic workmen, he was necessarily homosexual. So Derek Jarman and a host of others have asserted. The analyses are as crude as they are misguided. There is in fact no evidence at all that Caravaggio was homosexual and, as this detailed new biography attests, the plangent darkness of his work has more interesting origins than the colour of his skin.

He was brought up in Milan during the early years of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, a great transforming process of the late 16th century. It was a time when the sacramental system, with its emphasis upon outward tokens of inward grace, was being elaborately reasserted within the rituals of a spectacular faith; those who contemplate the origins of Caravaggio's theatricality may need to look no further than the processions in the streets of

Milan or of Rome. Yet to this visible piety was added tangible horror — the plague visited Milan and within hours took off Caravaggio's father and his grandfather. The artist learnt that light is always accompanied by darkness. For reasons unknown (and there are a great many unknowns even in this capacious biography) he decided that he wanted to become an artist and travelled to Rome in order to begin his apprenticeship. But already his personality threatened to overtake his genius — even before his departure it seems likely that he was involved in street brawls and may have been dispatched to prison in one of the first of his many incarcerations. Yet the times were propitious. On his arrival in 1592, at the age of 21, Rome was on the brink of a reawakening with churches and works of art being created or re-



Peter Ackroyd

He sought the vivid and the contemporaneous, heightened with a kind of theatrical realism. He painted Bacchus with dirty fingernails, like any street urchin, and used courtesans as his models for saints. The characters of his biblical and classical paintings could have come out of any noisome alley from the backstreets of Rome.

And that is, precisely, where Caravaggio often found himself. From the beginning of his career he was marked out as fearless, proud and quarrelsome — a "turbulent and extravagant character", according to this biography, who earned a reputation as a street fighter. He was associated with those roving gangs of Roman youth who behaved according to rigid codes of insult and honour. Yet Caravaggio possessed a character beyond conventional expectations: he was always odd and isolated, with his black cloak and dark garments as a sign of his strangeness.

divine in a pictorial variant of the miracle of transubstantiation.

A new spiritual art was being sought — by him and by his imitators — which might, in the words of Helen Langdon, "imitate visible reality, and create figures that seemed real".

Yet his is also a world of graphic passion, darkness and harsh activity within a dramatically heightened space.

This biography itself celebrates his achievement while placing it firmly within the culture and society of his time — there are descriptions of other painters, as well as of the patrons and poets of early 17th-century Italy.

It is, in some respects, too rich with detail, perhaps in recompense for the fact that so little is known for certain about Caravaggio's own life, and there are passages when the reader may become dazed by names and dates. Yet, even in his occasional absence, the violent and inviolable presence of the artist irradiates the narrative.

His fame won him envious detractors as well as enthusiastic proselytisers, and he himself became more belligerent and violent. His sudden prominence led to insecurity as well as pride, and there are several accounts of street fights over courtesans and critics.

Finally he was forced from Rome after murdering a rival in the street and, with sentence of death imposed upon him, he fled in turn to Genoa, Naples, Malta and Sicily. He was "restless, unquiet, ever on the move, feared as a man deranged, described as a madman".

In every place he left tokens of his genius, however, working on the spot to provide images of religious suffering and consolation. In Malta *The Beheading of St John the Baptist* emerged, and in Sicily *The Adoration of the Shepherds* was completed. In the life of no other artist, perhaps, has there been such a litany of sorrowful and glorious mysteries.

He died of a fever on his way back to Rome, having been falsely imprisoned, and this convincing biography closes, appropriately, with a poem which declared him to have been "a victim of misfortune". Caravaggio knew as much himself.

In one of his last paintings, *David with the Head of Goliath*, he painted his own features upon the severed head of the giant.

CARAVAGGIO: A Life
By Helen Langdon
Chatto & Windus, £25
ISBN 0 701 16063 2



Street fighting man: Michelangelo Caravaggio's self-portrait in his *David with the Head of Goliath*

Words that wear so well

■ **WOULD** you like to sport a *Literati T-shirt*, designed by an Italian publisher and proclaiming slogans such as Jock Kerouacs "Where are we going now?" and Bruce Chatwin's "What am I doing here?" The *staid Booksellers' Association* has gone wild and commissioned a series of them from the firm *Parole di Cotone* — or "words of cotton". From today just go into a bookshop and ask for the clothing department.

■ **AT** a Faber launch for Harold Pinter's latest work, *Various Voices: Prose, Poet-*

ry, *Politics*, 1948-1998, his editor, Peggy Butcher, hailed him as "the greatest living playwright". Pinter modestly noted that it was not for him to consider such comparisons — but, of course, he respected her judgment in the matter.

■ **IS** there a cryptographer out there? The historian Andrew Roberts is finishing his biography of the great Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, but he has a problem. When Kaiser Wilhelm II came to the German throne in 1888, Lord Salisbury made some comments on

DIARY OF LETTERS

him, and his daughter, Lady Gwendolen Cecil, wrote them in code. Roberts sent the encrypted passage to GCHQ, but even it could not decipher the diary entry. Can any reader of *The Times* help? Copies of the mysterious entry can be had from Roberts, c/o Weidenfeld and Nicolson, Orion House, 5 Upper St Martin's Lane, London WC2H 9EA. We will report any results.

■ **It is 150 years ago this month that WH Smith opened its first railway bookstall, the famous Euston Road stall.** By the beginning of the 1900s its reputation, along with that of other station kiosks, had gone down. With *The Times Literary Supplement* complaining about the "halfpenny dreadfuls" on sale, and it has been a troubled story since then. For the anniversary this month Smith is overhauling what are now its "Travel Bookshops" and has invited some authors to choose their favourite books to put on sale. *Julian Barnes* has chosen *Ford Madox Ford's The Good Soldier*, *A.S. Byatt* has picked *Middlemarch*, and *Martin Amis* has chosen his hero *Saul Bellow's The Adventures of Augie March* — but with a curious comment: "The book is a catalyst of visionary genius." Aren't catalysts usually removed these days?

IN metro ON SATURDAY

Bollywood to My Beautiful Laundrette: Indian actor Saeed Jaffrey talks about his autobiography. Also: Football books — which is top scorer? And The Ossie Clark Diaries

A poet taken out of time

ILAN STAVANS
LORCA
A Dream of Life
By Leslie Stainton
Bloomsbury, £20
ISBN 0 7475 4328 0



Federico Garcia Lorca with a friend in New York

Modern society incapable of fully appreciating his talents. His courage to unsettle, to speak out, to personify his own dreams, is rightly applauded. There is something in her portrait that makes him look like a Spanish imitation of Oscar Wilde, even though Lorca dreamt of surpassing Wilde, of making him look insignificant, like "some sort of obese, pusillanimous queen".

no room to analyse his limitations. She submits a biography traditional in style and unreflective in spirit that adds little to our understanding of Lorca's complexities. The Spanish-American War is predicated in an early chapter as the parameter against which he must be understood, but Stainton devotes to it only a handful of repetitive paragraphs. And the Civil War is also left unexplored under any refreshing light. These limitations have a serious impact on the overall portrait of Lorca. Why has he eclipsed, beyond Spain's borders, poets of the highest calibre, such as Alberti and Gilkin, Machado and Salinas? Among the multiple studies that preceded Stainton are, most notably, those of Ian Gibson, whose research of Lorca's death confronted the Spanish Government. To a large extent, his work explained Lorca for a post-Franco Spain, a country infatuated with its newly found freedom. But Stainton's should have been a biography for our *fin de siècle*, for it comes after Stonewall and the consolidation of the Gay Movement. It is published at a time when Spain has retrenched into a more reactionary political climate and *la movida*, the explosive artistic movement in Spain, is rapidly turned into history.

And perhaps most significant, it comes just as the nation as a whole is allowing its various autonomous regions to indulge in a dream: the dream of secession. Why is Lorca so significant today? What does he tell us about Hispanic sexuality? In what way is he the symbol of a Spain no longer alive?

About Lorca's sexuality, for instance, Stainton doesn't seem to be capable of offering the right clues. What type of relationship did Lorca have with Salvador Dali, a close friend in his formative years? What about his rigid upbringing and his explorations of Havana and Buenos Aires? And about his encounter with the Whitmanesque New York and his escapades in Vermont? Similarly, his success in making poetry out of folklore — the "Spanish popular soul" — and vice versa is seen by Stainton as a sign of genius without ever attempting to elucidate what is truly "Spanish" in him and if such an adjective is still applicable as we move into the next millennium.

A century after the loss of Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Philippines, Spain is yet again submerged in a heated debate about its collective identity. That a new major biography of its national poet arrives dated is, clearly, another symptom of what the country has been so incapable of confronting: its present.

Evoking souls of the departed

MOST Jews nowadays view Poland as a graveyard: the site of the most clinical of this century's various experiments in extinction. For the Polish Catholic diaspora, the link is probably more positive. For both sets of émigrés, such events as the installation of a Polish Pope and the cracking of the Communist carapace will have quickened the pulse. Although individual Jewish lives continued in Europe after the war, Jewish life was eradicated. And it is this, in its most lively incarnation — the 19th-century, Yiddish-speaking, Polish *shtetl*, or village — that Lilian Nattel evokes in her first novel.

GERALD JACOBS
THE RIVER MIDNIGHT
By Lilian Nattel
Review, £12.99
ISBN 0 7472 2215 0

PEARS ON A WILLOW TREE
By Leslie Pietrzyk
Granta, £9.99
ISBN 1 85207 220 5

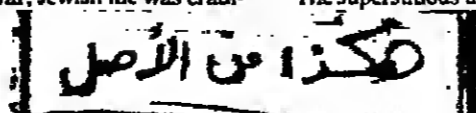
Shtetl life is highlighted by the technique of presenting a handful of key events — an arrest, secret sexual liaisons, a scandalous pregnancy — from the contrasting perspectives of different characters. Less suc-

cessful are the random touches of magic, the intrusion of occasional clairvoyant commentary, and the brief excursions beyond Blazka to New York and Warsaw.

If one is constantly aware of the division between sentimentality and schmaltz, for the most part Nattel exercises enough control to keep on the right side, conveying a real sense of the spiritual warmth of a community and of its erosion.

can trace their lineage — is itself a kind of mother. The novel is set in the United States, mainly in Detroit, the focus of Polish Catholic immigration, but also in Arizona, where the rebellious Ginger attempts to escape the hold of the past. She succeeds only in embracing a destructive alcoholic, leaving her fully Americanised daughter Amy to pick up the pieces.

Pietrzyk's portrayal of the bonds between mothers and daughters is both powerful and subtle. "The old ways" are gradually squeezed out through the generations like toothpaste from a tube but, unless their importance is acknowledged, they cannot be relinquished without pain.



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BOOKS



Can't get no satisfaction: "Treating women with massage and vibration could be done medically, unblushing, because it had nothing to do with real sex"

A touch of sexual hysteria

Technology was at hand when men had problems with the sexuality of women, says Jeanette Winterson

Rachel Maines was researching into crochet patterns when she realised that many of the aids in women's magazines of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were for vibrators.

Under such headings as "Aids that Every Woman Appreciates", and "Such Delightful Companions", were battery and plug-in devices with applicators and vibrators, promising that they could be used "with every comfort and safety on the delicate parts of the body". In 1922, the Star Vibrator was offered "with six feet of cord. Comes in a good looking black box. Perfect for weekend trips."

Maines assumed she was going mad but began a new line of research that threw the switch on that dark corner nobody wants to look into: the female genital organs.

As early as the 1st century AD the physician Galen had recommended rubbing of the vulva as a cure for hysteria. That most women were hysterical, nobody doubted. Plato and Hippocrates explained it with their wandering womb theories, and the symptoms of hysteria could be seen in all types of women, particularly nuns, virgins, and "widows who lie fallow". While marriage was the best cure for hysteria, vulvic massage was considered pretty good, though male physicians complained it was difficult to learn.

During the Renaissance, the French surgeon Ambroise Paré wrote that the "raging

THE TECHNOLOGY OF ORGASM 'Hysteria', the Vibrator, and Women's Sexual Satisfaction

By Rachel P. Maines Johns Hopkins University, £15 ISBN 0 80185 941 7



womb" should be tickled by the midwife's finger while the English herbalist Nicholas Culpeper described in detail the standard medical method to bring a woman to orgasm and so avoid Womb-Furie.

By the middle of the 19th century it seems that Womb-Furie had reached epidemic proportions among middle-class Western women. Doctors were still calling it hysteria, or the new disease of neurasthenia, and the symptoms were frighteningly vague but certainly included headaches, irritability, insomnia, tension, tearfulness and an inability to enjoy proper marital relations.

Those proper marital relations were, of course, penetration and male orgasm. This inflexible male yardstick excluded any other kind of sexual

satisfaction, with the bizarre result that while the majority of women were considered abnormal or frigid because they did not reach orgasm in coitus, treading them with vulvic massage and vibration could be done medically, unblushing, because it had nothing to do with real sex. The diagnosis was not a sexual organ.

Doctors who had to put up with a steady stream of female patients seeking the relief obtained from the "paroxysm" accompanying pelvic massage were only too delighted to invent and invest in mechanical fingers to do the job for them.

The first vibrators appeared around 1880 and seem to have been in constant use until the late 1920s, when their sudden appearance in pornographic films, and the new sexual awareness of the Freudian school, caused them quietly to disappear from the market until their triumphant return as a sex-aid in the 1960s.

As usual, Freud has a lot to answer for. His (in)famous distinction between vaginal and clitoral orgasm dignified penetrative sex, while both drawing attention to and dismissing the function of the clitoris as a pleasure-machine.

Thanks to Freud, women who felt guilty about never reaching an orgasm during intercourse could now feel guilty about coming within four minutes of a bit of vulvic stimulation. Doctors hastily withdrew the services of their padded pelvic massage tables, and those searching the ads pages of their crochet magazines found no more invitations to "glow with health".

When Kinsey investigated what became known as the myth of the vaginal orgasm, male medical colleagues reacted with what would have been called hysteria, had they been

female. In tantrumous outbursts, Kinsey was accused of "validating neurotic women", and men were assured that there was no scientific difficulty with tagging 80 or 90 per cent of women as "abnormal" solely because they did not climax in coitus. As Rachel Maines points out, we usually call "normal" that which defines the experience of the majority.

Given that women cannot alter their physiology and that most women orgasm through clitoral pressure and not vaginal penetration, why has there been such an investment in re-

structuring a healthy woman's sexuality as a malfunction? The investment, of course, is in the penis and it seems that men would rather stand by their own absurdities than put their finger on the problem.

Rachel Maines's book is full of wonderful descriptions of the "job nobody wanted", including photographs of early vibrators and vaginal electrodes of the kind enthused over by Mr Kellogg of Corn Flakes fame. Women, he tells us, "light up" under such electrical stimulation. It brings a whole new dimension to the sunshine breakfast, doesn't it?



Designer lives and loves

SHOPPING By Gavin Kramer Fourth Estate, £9.99 ISBN 1 85702 807 4

PRADA. Gucci. A large strawberry milkshake: wannabe "it" girl Sachiko knows what she really really wants. The man to feed her label habit is Alistair Meadowlark, an oafish, white-faced suit, working in pre-millennial Tokyo. So we find ourselves trailing from one boudoir to another, by way of Mister Donut. But Meadowlark's eyes exceed his salary and it becomes obvious that an orphan Tamagotchi would stand more chance of survival than their bizarre relationship. Gavin Kramer's impressive first novel is stylish but never flippant in its exploration of abuse and loneliness.

Marital woe

THE POLLEN ROOM By Zoë Jenny Bloomsbury, £13.99 ISBN 0 7475 4130 2

YOU think you have weird parents? Beat this. Jo has a mother who likes to sprinkle pollen on the floor, lie down on top of the poney carpet and breathe it deep into her nostrils like a raintree bee. No wonder Jo dreams of monsters and hangs her sweat-drenched sheets out to dry each morning. Despite having been raised by her father, while her flighty mother ran off with another man, Jo suddenly finds herself responsible for the very woman who rejected her. Zoë Jenny's account of a marriage break-up is both barmy and believable and her words, translated by Michael Hofmann, are an exciting mish-mash of dreamy images and reminding realism.

Art nouveau

NEW YORK MOSAIC Three Novels By Isabel Bolton Virago, £12.99 ISBN 1 86049 598 2

WHEN first published in the States, Isabel Bolton inspired comparison to Henry James. Almost 50 years on, we have a chance to decide for ourselves in a volume of work which sees her published in this country for the first time. These three novels — packed full of failed artists and cocktail sinks who swirl and chatter their way around New York's Upper East Side — do not disappoint. Whether she is despairing of the literary chatter she so despised or showing us around the 1939 World's Fair, her take on 20th-century Americana is utterly individual.

Western ties

THE MERCY SEAT By Rilla Askew Penguin, £8.99 ISBN 0 14 027760 9

RILLA ASKEW'S novel about pioneer communities in the West is published in England after receiving the critical equivalent of a full body massage in the States. Written in a style reminiscent of William Faulkner and Cormac McCarthy, Askew describes 19th-century Oklahoma through the eyes of the family-minded Mattie Lodi, a strong young girl, desperate to keep her dysfunctional family together. Askew's landscapes are big and beautiful, her descriptions of the dynamics of their struggle quite mesmerising.

Two touches

JACOB'S HANDS By Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood Bloomsbury, £6.99 ISBN 0 7475 4050 0

WHEN Huxley and Isherwood first sent the treatment for *Jacob's Hands* to Hollywood in 1944, it was thrown back in their faces. "The studio people thought it was quite deplorable," Isherwood remembered. "They wanted something suave and cynical." In writing what is essentially a parable of salvation and sanctification, with a healer as its main character, the famous duo struggled to make it sexy enough for mass release. But although *Jacob's Hands* cannot even pretend to be an embryonic movie classic, it provides an insight into its authors' spiritual meanderings.

ALEX O'CONNELL

The right man gets it wrong

In January 1994, Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Rose seized the poisoned chalice of command of the Bosnian element of Unprofor, the UN Protection Force. His predecessor had resigned six months early, after the belligerents' intransigence and the UN Security Council's tendency to pass impossible mandates. Rose — ex-SAS, architect of the end of the Iranian Embassy siege and instrumental in bringing about the Argentine ceasefire in the Falklands — was hailed as the intelligent hard-man who would grip a demoralised force and push all sides into settlement.

Yet he returned to Britain a year later with the shine on his reputation dulled. He was seen as the pro-Serb appeaser who had stopped Nato bullying Palestine into peace. The fact that the Dayton agreement followed the sort of bombing campaign he had fought to prevent suggested that peace could have come on his watch, not his successors. If he had only had Rupert Smith's nerve.

This is unfair. Peace could only come when the US decided, and made Sarajevo understood, the necessity of a Bosnian-Serb political endgame; when the Serbs appreciated that they could only lose from the further fighting; and when the international community was ready to make the necessary commitment. Though the US-Sarajevo shift was evident in late 1994, the other elements appeared only in 1995, with Croatian and Bosnian gains on the battlefield, and the softening of international resolve after Srebrenica and the hostage-taking which hampered Nato's response to it. Rose is right to highlight these, and the bias of the world's press.

But there is a kernel of truth in the criticism. *Fighting for Peace* is a response to the flak he took. Yet it also proves his critics' point. Rose got it wrong. He was terrified of crossing "The Mogadishu

DOMINIC DONALD FIGHTING FOR PEACE By Michael Rose Harvill, £18 ISBN 1 860 48512 9



Line": of peacekeepers using enough force to be seen as parties to the conflict. He refused to take actions which he thought would turn his peacekeepers into warfighters. The notion that there was something between the two — enforcement — only appears in his epilogue, and is poorly understood. Unprofor tried to do too many things at the same time. Rupert Smith was ready to have the Serbs expose these contradictions; Rose was not. And though the obsolescence of this warfighting/peacekeeping polarity may not have been apparent then, it appears Jurassic now. Rose does himself a disservice by refusing to accept it.

But the West made many bad calls over Bosnia. Set against these — early recognition of Bosnia followed by the insistence that its war was a civil one, the refusal to back the safe areas with troops, the plethora of peacekeepers and their separation from peacekeepers, and the US's obstruction in 1992-93-94 of the settlement that was signed in 1995 — Rose's mistake was a small one. This book shows that he made a decent fist of an impossible job. He was the right man in the right place at the wrong time.



Bosnian nightmare: Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Rose

Mount gives the historical novel such a good name

IAN MCINTYRE JEM (AND SAM) A Revenger's Tale By Ferdinand Mount Chatto & Windus, £14.99 ISBN 0 7011 6815 3



FERDINAND MOUNT keeps an impressive number of balls in the air. When he chooses, he writes incisively about politics. Over the past seven years he has been conducting a highly successful irrigation programme at the TLS, territory previously notorious for its aridity. He also makes regular releases into the headwaters of two distinct streams of fiction.

The broader of these he calls *A Chronicle of Modern Twilight*. In parallel he produces his *Tales of History and Imagination*. The first of these, *Umbrella*, was about the misfortunes of Lord Aberdeen, unhappiest and unluckiest of Queen Victoria's Prime Ministers. Now, in *Jem (and Sam)*, he offers us the picturesque tale of a historically imagined forebear, Jeremiah Mount, whose Memorials have come to light in a county record office.

Jem is an accomplished sexual opportunist. If one were drawing up a Gentle-

man's Dream XI in that department with, say, Tom Jones and Bill Clinton as the opening pair, *Jeremiah Mount* could well go in first wicket down. He is quickly off the mark with a drive through the covers, this in the company of darling Erum, who had great bubbles and threw her skirts up as cheerfully as if she was hanging out her washing. Later he scores freely with two successive Duchesses of Albatross, although he is out for a duck when he directs his charm on Mrs Pepsy.

It is, of course, Mrs Pepsy's wayward husband who appears in the brackets of the title and much of the book is taken up with Jem's efforts to bring Sam down. Friends and drinking companions at first — "when Sam was in wine I loved him better, for then he was a rogue unashamed" — they later become bitter rivals.

This is a marvellously vivid and entertaining evocation of Cromwellian and Restoration England. Mount paints from a rich palette, but the brushwork is stylishly economical. *Lord Shaftesbury* is memorably etched as "a little man with a canting whining voice like a dog that will be let out" and the ponderous reactor of Churn also lingers in the mind — "no woman had been lunatic enough to permit Mr Hignell up her petticoats, and he had breath like a badger".

Chamo & Windus's burb-writer detects "disconcerting echoes of our own time" in this murky tale, but I don't believe their author set out to disconcert anyone. I suspect his aim was to amuse himself — and anyone passing who cared to look over his shoulder. The result reads like *Moff Flanders* with the boring bits edited out.

When is an historical novel not an historical novel? When it is written by Ferdinand Mount. He is in danger of giving the genre a good name.

ures
time

Bargains of the week: Mystic theatricals in Wiltshire; two-for-one Canaries offer; say Hi to Bali at a discount



A selection of last-minute holiday and travel opportunities at home, on the Continent and farther afield, many at bargain prices

BRITAIN

A HOUSE PARTY venue in deepest Herefordshire is available from Crystal Premier Britain. The converted rectory sleeps 15, has an indoor pool and outdoor tennis court and costs £650 to rent for two nights and £1,180 for a week. Details: 0181-390 8513.

PERCHED on the edge of a council estate, the bizarre-looking Tillington Hall in Stafford might not be everyone's idea of a dream hotel, but it has an indoor pool and gym, offers good food, is handy for Alton Towers and available at a discount from Superbreak. Half-board costs £40 a night until Monday, with further savings next month. Details: 01904 679999.

JERSEYS pre-Christmas celebrations, Fête de Noël, can be enjoyed on a three-night break from December 11 with Modern Hotels. The £85 package includes return catamaran crossings from Poole and half-board. Details: 01534 59529.

DISCOVER the myths and legends of the "Land of the Moonrakers" on weekend breaks in Wiltshire. Dawn over Stonehenge, guided tours of Avebury and Salisbury and a visit to the theatre are all included for £149, together with half-board in small hotels or guesthouses. The next break runs from December 11 to 13. Details: 01722 500956.

EDINBURGH remains a winter favourite for shopping and culture and Goldenrail is offering savings at the Parliament House Hotel, with B&B reduced to £33.60 and special deals on Sundays. Details: 01904 638973.

GUESTS can eat (a total of nine meals), drink and be merry, with carol-singing and hill-walking, on a three-night Christmas break at a Victorian country house hotel in Mid Wales, available from Sunvil UK. The holiday starts on Christmas Eve and costs £366. Details: 0181-232 9788.

EUROPE

CHRISTMAS markets in Alsace, in spectacularly decorated villages such as Strasbourg or villages such as La Petite Pierre, are featured in Crosta's special programme from November 27. Prices start at £117 for three nights' B&B with return Eurotunnel or ferry crossings. Details: 0161-926 9999.

SWEDEN is trying to steal some of the Santa Claus market from its Finnish neighbours with short breaks to Stockholm that include day trips to Santaworld at Gesunda Mountain. The breaks are available every Friday from November 27 with Scantours and Travelscene. Prices starting at £510 for two nights' B&B and return flights; children go half-price. Details: Scantours, 0171-829 2927; Travelscene, 0181-427 4445.

CYPRUS for a fortnight's self-catering for £169, a saving of more than £100, seems an unbeatable offer from Sunset Holidays. Fly from Gatwick on November 25 and stay at apartments in Limassol. Details: 01204 434441.

FLORENCE, Venice and Rome are available for three

nights for £199 and four for £219 from Impulse Holidays next month. Return flights from Gatwick and B&B in central hotels are included. Details: 0181-741 9007.

FLY to the Canaries at no charge is the eye-catching offer from Club Travel 2000. But you must first persuade a friend to pay a modest £119 for a return ticket from Manchester to Tenerife. The two-for-one offer applies to flights departing on December 4 and returning a fortnight later. Details: 0161-968 2000.

SKIING is about to start again in Europe, and some of the best offers feature Austria. Crystal Ski is offering a week in a chalet in Söll from December 12 for £269. The price includes return flights and half-board with free local wine. Details: 0181-399 5144.

A WEEKEND of skiing on Austrian slopes—to see whether you like it or to put in some practice before the season really starts—is on offer from Thomas Cook Holidays. Fly from Gatwick on December 11 in time for an afternoon on skis, enjoy two nights' half-board, visit the Christmas market in Salzburg and pay from £249. Details: 01733 335513.



One of the great temples at Luxor: Nile cruises for £299

LONG HAUL

CRUISING the Nile for a week for £299, including full board and return flights from London or Manchester, is the pre-Christmas present on offer from Seafarer as Egypt tries to rebuild its tourist trade. The holidays are available from the next three Thursdays. Details: 0171-234 0500.

BALI is also available at bargain prices, with Premier Holidays offering ten-night stays from £599 for departures between November 25 and December 9. Fly from Heathrow or Manchester and stay at the Puri Santian Beach Resort. Details: 01223 516677.

KENYA for a fortnight for £379 in an hotel with B&B is available from Co-op Travel-care, but move fast to enjoy this Cosmo holiday because the flight leaves Gatwick on Sunday. Details: 0541 500388.

A TAN in time for Christmas should be guaranteed by taking advantage of a bargain offer to Barbados from Lunn Poly. Fly from Manchester on December 7 for a fortnight's self-catering with First Choice at Sunset Crest and the price, based on four sharing, is £399.

Details from Lunn Poly Holiday Shops.

VANCOUVER keeps itself warm during the winter with a lively entertainment season in clubs, concert halls and theatres, which can be enjoyed in a package from Thomas Cook Holidays. Three nights in the city, plus two in quieter Victoria or a resort, are on offer from £545, including return flights. Details: 01733 418750.

GAMBLE Christmas away with a week in Las Vegas with Funway Holidays. The company is offering flights from a choice of UK airports on December 21 and accommodation at the Circus Circus Hotel on the famous Strip, with three casinos, three pools and the Adventuredome for £765. Details: 0181-466 0222.

All prices are per person and based on two travelling together and sharing a room.

WEEKEND TRAVEL See The Times on Saturday for more flight bargains and last-minute holidays

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Purpose of Money misa

Law Report Trade union natu

Law Report November 19 1998 Court of Appeal

Purpose of custody time limits must be given due weight

Regina v Manchester Crown Court, Ex parte McDonald, Regina v Leeds Crown Court, Ex parte Hunt, Regina v Winchester Crown Court, Ex parte Forbes, Ex parte Wilson and Mason

Before Lord Bingham of Cornhill, Lord Chief Justice and Mr Justice Collins (Judgment November 9)

On an application for extension of custody time limits, the court had to be careful to give full weight to the overriding purposes of section 2A(3) of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 and regulation 5(3) of the Prosecution of Offences (Custody Time Limits) Regulations (SI 1987 No 299) which were:

(i) to ensure that the periods for which unconvicted defendants were held in custody awaiting trial were as short as reasonably and practically possible;

(ii) to ensure that the periods for which unconvicted defendants were held in custody awaiting trial were as short as reasonably and practically possible;

(iii) to ensure that the periods for which unconvicted defendants were held in custody awaiting trial were as short as reasonably and practically possible;

(iv) to ensure that the periods for which unconvicted defendants were held in custody awaiting trial were as short as reasonably and practically possible;

(v) to ensure that the periods for which unconvicted defendants were held in custody awaiting trial were as short as reasonably and practically possible;

(vi) to ensure that the periods for which unconvicted defendants were held in custody awaiting trial were as short as reasonably and practically possible;

Money misapplied by recipient

Regina v Klineberg, Regina v Marsden

Before Lord Justice Rose, Mr Justice Scott Baker and Mr Justice Maurice Kay (Judgment November 6)

Where money was received for the purpose of transmission to a stakeholder but was then misapplied by the recipient for his own purposes, section 5(3) of the Theft Act 1968 applied so that the money belonged to the person who paid it, provided that it could be proved that the recipient was under a legal obligation to retain and deal with it or its proceeds in a particular way and that what occurred was a breach of that obligation.

Where, as in the present case, people were induced to contract or did contract, by virtue of implied terms or otherwise, on the basis that their money would be safeguarded by trusteeship, there was clearly a legal obligation within the meaning of section 5(3).

The next and final question in relation to section 5(3) was whether the defendant's appropriation in each case the prosecution could prove a breach of the obligation.

The counts fell into two categories: those where it was alleged that the stakeholder was TTT; and those where the intending purchasers had been informed that the trusteeship would be via the solicitor or his firm.

There was a formal admission at the trial that the total sum paid by Powerhouse to the solicitor and his firm was £29,000. That caused counsel for the appellants to submit that the obligation was not to be proved that, in relation to any one of the counts in the second category, counts 4, 5 and 8, the £29,000 did not include the money or its proceeds which were alleged to have been stolen.

After considerable hesitation, their Lordships had come to the conclusion that, unattractive though the submission was in its merits, it was correct.

Although the counts in question were properly described as simple counts, they could not be described, as general deficiency counts in the technical sense of that term.

The prosecution was not relieved of its burden of proving that, in relation to each of those counts, the relevant sum did not go to the solicitor or his firm in accordance with the obligation. It could not discharge that burden and accordingly the convictions in respect of counts 3, 4, 5 and 8 must be quashed.

Agent entitled to his commission

Nahum v Royal Holloway and Bedford New College

Before Lord Justice Nourse, Lord Justice Waller and Sir Iain Gidwell (Judgment November 12)

To be entitled to commission for introducing a buyer to a seller, an agent was required to show that it was his actions that brought about the relationship of buyer and seller.

The defendant's agent had introduced the plaintiff to the defendant's agent for the sale of the paintings. The plaintiff's agent had introduced a buyer for the paintings.

The judge found that it was Mr Nahum who had introduced the plaintiff to the defendant's agent for the sale of the paintings.

The judge's finding that Mr Nahum had introduced the plaintiff to the defendant's agent for the sale of the paintings was correct.

European Law Report

Trade union nature of organisation

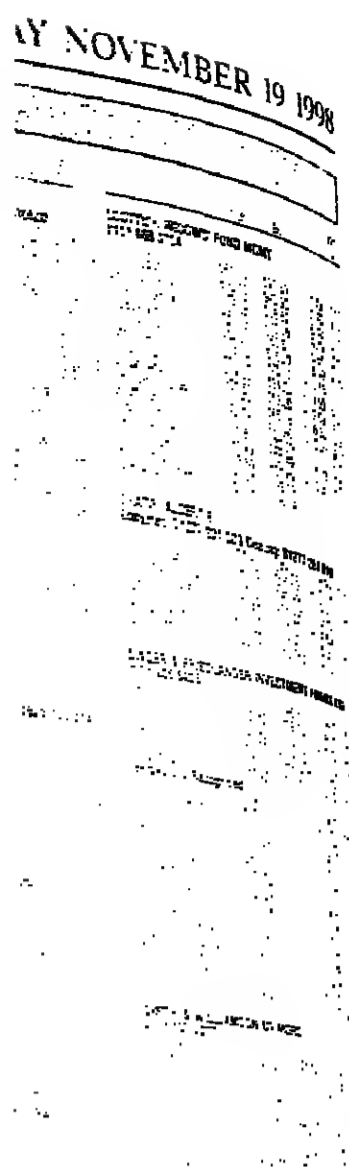
Institute of the Motor Industry v Customs and Excise Commissioners. Case C-149/97. Before P. J. G. Kapteyn, President of Chamber and Judges G. F. Mancini, J. L. Murray, H. Ragnemalm and K. M. Ioannou. Advocate General C. Cosmas (Opinion May 14) (Judgment November 12)

An organisation was entitled to exemption from value-added tax, as an organisation with aims of a trade union nature, if it defended the interests of its members, whether workers, employers, independent professionals or traders, and represented them vis-à-vis third parties.

The Sixth Chamber of the Court of Justice of the European Communities held when giving a preliminary ruling, on a reference under article 177 of the EC Treaty by the VAT and Duties Tribunal, that an organisation was entitled to exemption from VAT as falling within the scope of that provision.

Luxembourg

AN EXCLUSIVE OFFER THE TIMES Christmas CDs—£1.98 each. Today The Times offers readers five exclusive Christmas CDs for only £1.98 each — and if you buy the set of five for £9.90 you receive a FREE CD of 12 traditional Christmas hymns and carols sung by St Paul's Cathedral Choir.



INDOOR ROWING

Redgrave sets sights on beating his record

By Mike Rosewell

MORE than 1,000 competitors aged from ten to 81 will take part in the British indoor rowing championships at the Rivermead Leisure Centre at Reading on Sunday.

Seventy-five rowing ergometers will be in operation all day on the race floor and a further 40 will be used for warming-up. Entrants include canoeists, explorers, footballers, marathon runners, swimmers, triathletes and wrestlers, but the winners of most of the 40 categories are likely to come from dedicated rowers.

Steve Redgrave, now 36 and four times an Olympic gold medal-winner, is competing in the 30-39 category and will be trying to beat his British 2,000 metres record of 5min 48sec, although his coach is predicting a time of 5min 52sec. His main opposition is likely to come from Colin Greenaway, 31, a member of the British double scull this year and an indoor winner in 1997.

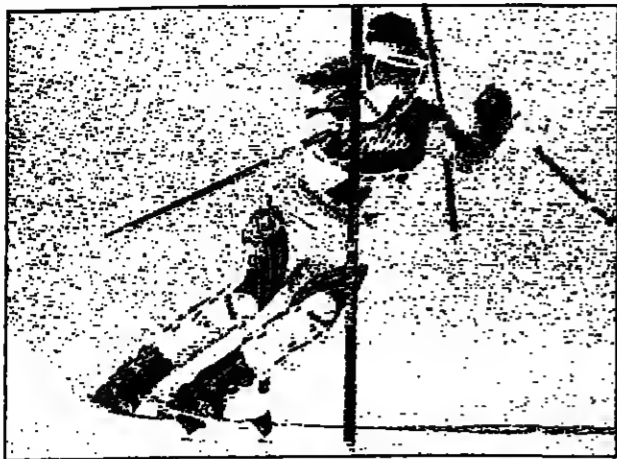
The open men's category reads like a "who's who" of British rowing, although Greg Searle, the former Olympic gold medal-winner and indoor world record-holder, and James Cracknell, Redgrave's coxless four crew-mate and twice a world champion, should be the men to watch. The predicted times for Searle and Cracknell are 5min 50sec and 5min 52sec. Cracknell will also be watching Redgrave's time, since he is on record as saying: "I don't just want to beat all the other fours in the world. I want to beat everyone in my four as well."

Cath Bishop, a world coxless pairs silver medal-winner this summer, looks likely to retain her women's indoor title with a predicted time of 6min 45sec.



Redgrave favourite

Briton returns with a mission



Carrick-Anderson on her way to eleventh place at Sestriere

After a period of disillusionment, skier Emma Carrick-Anderson is back on slopes

SARAH POTTER



Today marks a new beginning for Emma Carrick-Anderson, as well as a new season. The icy slopes of Park City, in the United States, will test the skill of skiing's elite as five months of World Cup slalom competition begins. Rumours of disillusioned retirement, rift only a year ago, have now been silenced and the 23-year-old Scot, the most talented of British skiers, is ready to face the future.

"This is a new me," she said. "I feel very different, very motivated. In the past, when I was working with a coach on a one-to-one basis, it was difficult because I was training and living in isolation. Thomas Schädle and Nils Cobberger were both brilliant coaches and if I had five other girls there with me, it would have been excellent."

Carrick-Anderson is vibrant and spirited. Sitting in foreign hotels with no one to talk to is not her idea of fun. Now, though, she is back in a team environment and feels that her best is yet to come. "I didn't want to jank it in because skiing is the only thing I've ever really wanted to do," she said. "So I had a chat with the coaches of the Finnish Alpine team, to see if I could train with them, and they struck up an agreement with our federation."

The British Ski and Snowboard Federation is already reaping the rewards. At the end of October, in Solden, Austria, Carrick-Anderson completed her first World Cup giant slalom, finishing in 37th place. "I was really pleased, because I had such a terrible

year last season," she said. "My ranking had slipped from No 49 into the eighties, proving that if you're not happy and you don't want it enough, it doesn't happen."

Her goal for this season, in which the Alpine thrills will be on show in ten countries, is to climb towards the definitive elite: the top 30. "That's when you've made it in skiing," she said, "but it's difficult to sustain and amazing how people yo-yo. A couple of years ago, two Swedish girls were in the top five; now, they're not even in the top 70. It will be hard, but I know I can do it."

Isolated results show that she can. Her 1992 debut in the Albertville Olympic Games in France saw the freckly 16-year-old clinch a startling eighth place. Better though, she claims, was her eleventh position in the 1997 world championships in Sestriere, Italy. "It was more satisfying," she said. "When I was 16, there wasn't as much pressure and in Italy the conditions were very icy and difficult. It was an amazing feeling, the highlight of my career, and I want to experience it again."

This vigorous sense of future is all the more touching, heroic even, since it comes on



Smiling again: Carrick-Anderson has survived the bad times and looks for a rosy future

the back of a numbing, tragic past. Carrick-Anderson was brought up in Dunblane and her mother, Fiona, runs a kindergarten next to a school that can never be forgotten. "Mum had a lot of the kids before they went to the primary," she said. "What happened was sick and unbelievable and people are still trying to recover from the hurt."

The death of her father, Chris, two months ago, is achingly painful to accept. "Mum and Dad were very keen skiers, which is why I started aged 2," she said. "With Cairngorm not being very far away,

we'd go there at weekends and then we started to go abroad at Christmas and Easter. My family don't travel with me, but they come to visit sometimes and I hope my Mum will still do that."

"I think, with the things that have happened, I now realise that it's not the end of the world when I have a bad day. Those things have really changed my attitude and, while I'm glad I've got skiing to focus on, I also want to go out there and enjoy it. Being with the Finnish girls has brought that home, because if they have a bad time it's like: 'Tomorrow

is another day.' That's a really healthy attitude."

Staying healthy, she claims, is not something to think too keenly about when you're hurtling down an icy slope. "It's a dangerous sport and people do get hurt," she said. "Danger has to be put to the back of your mind, because you can't hold back and do well."

"I cut my ear off when I was 12 and had 36 stitches to sew it back, but the feeling I get from being in the mountains — remembering Albertville and Sestriere — that is what drives me. The isolation, all that, is a closed book."

SWIMMING

Rolph hunts the scalp of her European rival

By Craig Lord

SUSAN ROLPH, the double Commonwealth champion, heads a 48-strong Great Britain team that will battle for supremacy with Germany at the European short-course championships in Sheffield from December 11 to 13.

Rolph's personal challenge is daunting, even at the end of the best year of her swimming career, one in which she triumphed twice in Kuala Lumpur while still high on the crest of a wave that she caught after twice beating Jenny Thompson, the Olympic champion from the United States, at international events in the spring.

First, there are the two medley titles to retain and a European short-course record over 200 metres on which to improve; then, there is Sandra Völker, who beat Rolph in both the 50 and 100 metres freestyle at the inaugural championships in Rostock two years ago.

It is Völker's scalp that Rolph wants. In 1996, the year in which the sprinter from Hamburg was runner-up over 100 metres and the bronze medal-winner over 50 metres at the Olympic Games, she paid homage to Rolph by successfully arguing with officials — to her own detriment — that the Briton should be made woman of the championships; Rolph had equalled the medley record but was denied the £2,000 prize because officials argued that a record must be "broken" to merit the money, the first to be offered at a significant international swimming championship.

Völker is likely to be less accommodating this time, conscious, no doubt, of the rise and rise of Rolph throughout this year. Her German teammates will also have an eye on

the British squad in general. In 1996, Germany won 13 of the 38 titles.

The only other British winner was Mark Foster, who will defend his 50 metres butterfly and 50 metres freestyle titles. Foster is one of ten to be selected from the University of Bath, a fifth of the team and evidence that much good work is being done at the first centre of excellence for swimming in Britain.

Sheffield offers the large British team the chance to showcase the gains they have made in the short time since lottery funding has changed their lives and the organisation of swimming in this country. The man who is likely to make that most obvious is James Hickman, who is a serious prospect for several titles, including man of the championships. The pot of prize-money has been extended to more than £500,000, although some goes only if records fall.

GREAT BRITAIN SQUAD: Men: G. Stratell (University of Bath); S. Britin (University of Bath); A. Clayton (University of Bath); M. Foster (University of Bath); S. Handley (University of Bath); J. Harris (Greenwich Borough Masters); M. Harris (Tower Hamlets); J. Hickman (City of Leeds); G. Hudson (Portsmouth Northsea); M. Jones (Borough of Easing); M. Kibbi (Loughborough); R. Macken (University of Bath); G. Meadows (City of Leeds); O. Mew (University of Bath); S. Parry (City of Liverpool); N. Poole (Portsmouth Northsea); M. Reacher (City of Leeds); A. Ruckwood (City of Birmingham); S. Seddon (Doncaster District); G. Smith (Southport West); A. Whitelaw (City of Coventry); O. Wigg (City of Newcastle); N. Willey (University of Bath); J. Wilson (City of Leeds); Women: M. Becher (City of Leeds); A. Ruckwood (City of Birmingham); S. Seddon (Doncaster District); G. Smith (Southport West); M. Don-Duncan (Aston Central); H. Egan (Newcastle Starling); K. Evans (Newcastle); G. Foot (York City Saints); S. Hopkins (City of Chester); V. Horner (Southport Metro); C. Huddart (City of Leeds); K. Higgins (Newcastle); J. King (University of Bath); G. Lee (Camphill Edwards); K. Legg (Flemington Otago); M. Marshall (South Lincolnshire); J. Mullins (Nyrington Otago); S. Nesbit (Portsmouth Northsea); M. Pedder (Portsmouth Northsea); K. Picketing (Ipswich); S. Rolph (City of Newcastle); K. Seaman (Portsmouth Northsea); A. Sheppard (Ipswich & Beccles); H. Watts (Bath Otago)



Rolph faces a daunting challenge in her best season

Advertisement for Habitat Christmas sale. 'SAVE 20% AT HABITAT THIS CHRISTMAS'. Includes an image of a living room and a '20% off' token.

Advertisement for SHEEHAN on BRIDGE. 'By Robert Sheehan, Bridge Correspondent'. Includes a bridge hand diagram.

Advertisement for KEENE on CHESS. 'By Raymond Keene, Chess Correspondent'. Includes a chess board diagram and a list of moves.

Advertisement for WORD-WATCHING. 'By Philip Howard'. Includes a list of words and definitions.

Advertisement for WINNING MOVE. 'By Raymond Keene'. Includes a chess board diagram and a winning move.

Large vertical advertisement for Sun Bay racing, featuring a horse and jockey.

RACING: REPEAT HAYDOCK VICTORY INSPIRES MEMORIES OF DESERT ORCHID

Suny Bay turns back clock

By Chris McGrath

THE unquenchable gallop and rhythmic jumping that enabled Suny Bay to repeat last year's success were the only contributions to an acute sense of déjà vu after the Edward Hamner Chase at Haydock yesterday. Nor was it the way to see More Business again jumped so rustily on his way to fourth place. What jogged the memory was the happy face of Simon Sherwood, even though it was the one new element this time round.

Last year, Suny Bay and Graham Bradley had been welcomed back to the winner's enclosure by Charlie Brooks. He has since quit training but Sherwood, his replacement at Uplands, knows a magnificent grey chaser when he sees one. In 1999 he forged, with Desert Orchid, one of the immortal



Suny Bay, right, takes the last on his way to winning the Edward Hamner Chase at Haydock

Richard Evans

Nap: ROYAL EVENT (2.50 Wincanton) Need bet: Get Real (2.00 Warwick)

Cheltenham Gold Cups. It is a measure of Suny Bay's outstanding comeback yesterday that Sherwood agrees the resemblance to be more than a simple matter of coat colour. "Very honest horses, both of them," he said. "Dessie was a bit faster, but there's no doubt this fellow is a bit special, too."

mutual pressure of 12 stone on his back and deep mud underfoot. He had inspired memories of Crisp when second in the Grand National in April. Yet he was clearly thought ready to sustain his fine record fresh, backed from 4-1 in the morning to 2-1. As a car rain

RESULTS FROM YESTERDAY'S THREE MEETINGS

Table with race results including horse names, jockeys, and times for Haydock, Hereford, and Kempton. Races include the Edward Hamner Chase and other handicap races.

WARWICK

12.55 The Flying Doctor. 1.30 King On The Run. 2.00 Get Real. 2.30 Country House. 3.00 Torrid Express. 3.30 Laurel Seeker.

SEDGEFIELD

1.10 Lord Pat. 1.40 Radnappur. (2.10) 3.00 Tip. 2.40 From The Man. 3.10 XAIPETE. (2.10) 3.40 Coppin Jewel.

LEGAL & PUBLIC NOTICES. PUBLIC NOTICES section containing various legal notices, court orders, and administrative announcements.

WARWICK

Racing card for Warwick. Races include: 1.30 VARLEY HIRBS CHASE (€3,834; 2m 4f) (8); 2.00 MARY ANN HANDICAP CHASE (€4,760 2m) (4); 2.30 HOECHT ROUSSEL PANACUR MARES NH NOVICES HURDLE (€3,761; 2m 4f 110yd) (17); 3.00 SHIPSTON HANDICAP CHASE (€7,237; 3m 20f) (7); 3.30 ASHORNE NOVICES HURDLE (€2,732; 2m) (20).

SEDGEFIELD

Racing card for Sedgefield. Races include: 1.10 LOUD PAT. 1.40 RADNAPPUR. (2.10) 3.00 TIP. 2.40 FROM THE MAN. 3.10 XAIPETE. (2.10) 3.40 COPPIN JEWEL.

LEGAL & PUBLIC NOTICES. PUBLIC NOTICES section containing various legal notices, court orders, and administrative announcements.

LEGAL & PUBLIC NOTICES. PUBLIC NOTICES section containing various legal notices, court orders, and administrative announcements.

LEGAL, PUBLIC, COMPANY & PARLIAMENTARY NOTICES. A notice from a legal firm providing contact information and services.

LEGAL & PUBLIC NOTICES. A notice from a legal firm providing contact information and services.

RACELINE. A promotional banner for a racing service with a phone number and website.

LEGAL, PUBLIC, COMPANY & PARLIAMENTARY NOTICES. A notice from a legal firm providing contact information and services.

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RACELINE. A promotional banner for a racing service with a phone number and website.

GOLF

Pressure tells as O'Grady loses temper

FROM JOHN HOPKINS, GOLF CORRESPONDENT, IN SAN ROQUE

THERE is little in sports so brutally competitive as the six-round qualifying school that is under way in Spain and, after the first day on the Costa del Sol, there were professional golfers whose sunburnt faces concealed hearts in which hopes, fears and anger were juxtaposed.

The anger was experienced by Terry Hanson — and he was not even playing. Hanson, the professional at Cardiff Golf Club, was caddy for Stephen Dodd, a past Amateur champion. Dodd's three-ball included Nico van Rensburg and Mac O'Grady, of the United States, whose background is exotic and whose conversation is sometimes hard to follow. "I want to climb into the volcano and be at one with the lava," O'Grady said once. Yesterday, by way of explaining his presence on this side of the Atlantic, he said: "Coming back to Europe makes me feel like a little turtle making its way back to Galapagos."

O'Grady was on edge from

the start and on the 11th he and Van Rensburg had an altercation when O'Grady complained that Van Rensburg's caddy was moving in his line of sight. The American said later that Van Rensburg and Dodd had talked among themselves, ignored him and often moved in his line during the round. He walked off the 18th green without shaking either's hand.

The qualifying school is a stressful event, which probably accounts for O'Grady's behaviour and Hanson's exaggerated post-round remark about O'Grady: "I have never seen anything so disgusting in all my life." As no official complaints were registered, no action was taken. It is to be hoped the trio will have a more harmonious round when they play together again today, this time at Sotogrande.

The three-ball at San Roque of John Hawksworth, Michele Reale and Justin Rose represented the past, the present and the future of professional golf in Europe, as well as the

emotions of most of the competitors. Hawksworth was fearful of his chances after a disastrous 81. Reale was pleased with a round of 73 and Rose disappointed with his putting in his 78, ten strokes worse than Carlos Rodiles, a 23-year-old Spaniard who is the leader at San Roque.

Hawksworth, 37, won the Lytham Trophy in 1984 and competed in the Walker Cup in 1985 before turning professional. Thus began an almost annual pilgrimage for him as he attempted to win his card to compete on the European tour. He went to his first school in 1985: this is his twelfth.

Hawksworth knows all about life in the margins. Since 1985, he has won less than £10,000 on average annually in official prize-money. Still, he will not give up and when he hits strokes as well as he struck a long bunker shot with a metal wood on his 18th hole yesterday, he is entitled to his dreams. Malcolm Muggeridge entitled one volume of his autobiography *Tread Softly For You Tread On My Dreams*. Hawksworth could say much the same.

Reale won the Challenge Tour last year. He is a strong player whose experience and skill showed through in his 73, one over par, on a day when a strong wind made certain holes at San Roque difficult. The 8th, for example, required



Rose tees off on the 10th during his disappointing 78 at San Roque. Photograph: Andrew Redington/Allsport

Confident Westwood plays it by numbers

FROM PATRICIA DAVIES IN MIYAZAKI, JAPAN

LEE WESTWOOD was only No 3 in the European rankings this season, but in his quiet, bombast-free manner, the 25-year-old pointed out that he had won more tournaments than Colin Montgomerie, the perennial No 1, and Darren Clarke, No 2 for the first time.

"I think I've had the best season of us all," he said after the Volvo Masters. "I could make it eight wins by the end of the season."

True enough. In Japan last week, Westwood took his tally to six and today, in the seaside city of Miyazaki on the southern island of Kyushu, he begins his assault on the Dunlop Phoenix tournament, the richest event on the Japanese circuit, with a prize fund of 250 million yen (about £12 million). In two weeks' time, he

will be in South Africa for the Million Dollar Challenge, his last outing of a lucrative year.

"There are people who are good at winning," Andrew Chandler, Westwood's manager, said, "and Lee's one of the best." It is also what matters most to Westwood, who, to coin a paraphrase, has diamonds on the spikes of his shoes. He has won £2.35 million (£1.4 million) in prize-money alone this season and, according to Chandler, makes as much off the course as on.

To win this week, Westwood will need to overcome opposition of the quality of Tom Watson, the defending champion, Clarke, who has recovered from the gout that immobilised him for a week after his Volvo Masters win, José María Olazábal and Ernie Els.



Allen, of the Vardon Health and Leisure team, follows a drive off the 1st tee during the practice round at La Manga

Amateurs set for ultimate finale

FORGET, if you will, just for a while, about birdies and eagles and five-irons to three feet and 22 under par and St Andrews and Augusta National and Tiger Woods and Colin Montgomerie. What is about to take place here in the next two days represents the real, living, beating, glorious heart of the game of golf and without it all the rest has no meaning. This is amateur golf: it is where the sport has its soul.

On the South Course at the La Manga Club this morning, the opening blows will be struck in the sixth national final of *The Times* Mee's-Pierson Corporate Golf Challenge. In the still, warm air of this, the spiritual home of this competition, nervous grins will be exchanged, but there will be no humour in them, just the rictus smile of people who know that their resolve is about to be examined as never before.

Nerves will be stretched tighter than the top string of a G major banjo, static electricity will arc and spark there on the 1st tee as the players are exposed to the Cyclopan eye of the Sky Sports television camera. It will not be easy, far from it: but when was the accomplishment of anything truly worthwhile ever easy?

Somewhere in the world, somebody will, today, hit his first stroke in a tournament that will ultimately bring him a substantial amount of currency. That man will be happy, but what he will have achieved will be as nothing compared with what the four winners here will touch and hold tomorrow night, for mere money is ephemeral; there will be other pay days. For the 56 men playing here, the 36 holes of golf that await them represent the pinnacle of their sporting lives.

In competitive terms, it does not get much better than this. The minutest flaws in technique will be laid bare, viscera will be turned to jelly, there will be a constant battle between the temptation to go for the quixotically bold and the aching need to remain calm under fire. The performance-enhancing drug has not been invented that would help the players in this sun-kissed corner of south-east Spain; not even the finest Colombian marching powder would provide the adrenalin rush that will course through the veins of these 56 special people.

The next two days will be the culmination of nine remorseless months of competition that has involved the better part of 100,000 players. The Challenge is, beyond dispute, the biggest corporate golf tournament in the world.

Mel Webb sets the scene for what promises to be two days of gripping action



That original entry has now been reduced to 14 teams, the winners of regional finals that were held throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland last month. Tomorrow afternoon, a winner will have been proclaimed, but nobody, not even the team that finishes fourteenth, will have failed. When they have come so far and achieved so much, how can they be said to have failed?

To pick a winner from the field that has assembled here is to invite dismissal as a vainglorious charlatan or an incautious fool: such are the pitfalls of assessing the relative merits of teams who, by their very nature, are subject to the whims of form. Anybody who has ever played the Royal and Ancient game will identify with the fine tolerance that exists in amateur golf between, the good, the bad and the downright ugly.

However, if pushed, it is difficult to resist the temptation to cast the vote in the direction of Vardon Health and Leisure. Chris Goda, Steve Davies, Mark Allen and Paul Taylor won this event at La Manga last year and, having won the right to defend their title in a regional final, promptly won again at Charr Hills last month.

The team is underpinned by the two-handicap steadiness of the modest Goda and enhanced by the more volatile but equally potent contributions of his three team-mates. Last year, the mixture was an irresistible one: the local knowledge gained then might, just might, be the one small factor that separates them from the rest by tomorrow night. We shall see.

THE CHALLENGERS AT LA MANGA

1	CENTRAL HOME COUNTIES	Interfocus
2	SOUTH-EASTERN HOME COUNTIES	Vardon Health & Fitness
3	EASTERN HOME COUNTIES AND ANGLIA	Hatch End Fruit Ltd
4	NORTH	Walls Corroon Corporate
5	EAST MIDLANDS	Benson McGarvey Henderson
6	SCOTLAND	Wooden Spoon Society
7	NORTH WEST	British Steel Distribution
8	NORTHERN IRELAND	Northern Ireland Electricity
9	REPUBLIC OF IRELAND	Abra-vision
10	WEST MIDLANDS	Ferraris Piston Service
11	WALES AND SOUTH WEST	Tetra Laval
12	SOUTH	Higer Ultratrac
13	WESTERN HOME COUNTIES	Aston Clinton Dental Partnership
14	NORTHERN HOME COUNTIES	Milton Keynes & North Bucks Chamber of Commerce

TEAMS: Interfocus: J Ockens handicap 5, S Best 19, B Norman 18, T Adcock 12, Vardon Health and Fitness: C Goda 2, S Davies 18, M Allen 12, P Taylor 16, Hatch End Fruit: S Aggarwal 14, J Aggarwal 16, A Smith 12, H Wallace 16, Benson McGarvey Henderson: P McGarvey 6, P Shelton 12, T Coupe 5, M Casler 6, Wooden Spoon Society: B Orayal 13, G Langley 21, C Chesley 1, G Thompson 8, British Steel Distribution: J Pennington 20, Kyung Su Han 14, G Pilling 10, M Cook 20, Northern Ireland Electricity: M Bergard 16, I Hanna 10, T Sloan 13, E Hutton 12, Extra-vision: R Brown 12, C Cunningham 2, G McAuliffe 20, F Carroll 16, Ferraris Piston Service: R French 12, P Craddock 8, R Jones 9, J Weston-Taylor 8, Tetra Laval: R Suggate 9, S Lewis 2, M Prater 16, M Betch 19, Higer Ultratrac: O Hicks 8, T Clarke 18, J Nixon 14, T Bygale 10, Aston Clinton Dental Partnership: J Doolaghan 18, J Keyes 18, G Szymanski 7, A von Backstrom 18, Milton Keynes & North Bucks Chamber of Commerce: N Franklin 5, P Robinson 14, A Thomas 22, T Roberts 6, Walls Corroon Corporate: G Kichne 12, A Frankland 18, I Hartley 19, C Watson 4

MAJOR R V STANLEY'S XV: P Jorgensen (Perth), P Sampson (Worce and England), A Currier (London Welsh, rep L), Paine, Worcester, 46), J Hammett (Glouce Francis, rep H Graham, Reading, 54), S Enoch (Pontypridd), P Burke (Cardiff and Ireland), rep Currier, 74), D Dewdney (Bristol and Ombersley, rep M Oates, Sarcoms, 41), J Buckell (London Welsh and Wales), rep B Pope, London Welsh, 35), B Mitchell (Worce, rep P Nardwell, Oxford University, 74), J Leiner (Pontypridd and United States, rep Baskin, 54), G Lewellyn (Macclesfield and Wales, rep J Lewellyn, Posing Club, 89), C Vogel (Cardiff and United States, rep Lewellyn, 68), J Soffe (Bristol, A Dawling (Bristol), P Soffe (Worce), rep L Wilkinson, Worcester, 65).
Referee: R Goodfellow (Worcester).
* Denotes Bus.

RUGBY UNION

Oxford are made to work hard for win

Oxford University38
Major R V Stanley's XV22

BY ROBERT HANDS

THE relevance of this annual fixture has dwindled for the outside world over the years. Gone are the times when established internationals of the day would don the white shirt of Major Stanley's XV and do battle against eager young students. Nowadays, the organisers of this match have to contend with contractual requirements, clashing overseas tours and the lesser standing of the ancient universities in rugby's national structure.

Nevertheless, at Iffley Road, the motivation is just as strong now as it was for the forebears of the 1998 Oxford University side. With their game against Cambridge at Twickenham less than three weeks away, time is running short for fringe players to make their case. The three players returning from injury did their causes no harm: Kelaher, the captain, was a dynamic force; Challenger, at No 8, was the creative influence in the forwards, while Pawson came on as a replacement in the centre and caught the eye.

Oxford were given a serious workout since the invitation team knitted together quickly — and opened the scoring when Paul Sampson scored a superb individual try. Throughout the 80 minutes (it was injury-time before the Dark Blues pulled away), the two sides kept pace with each other and the aching limbs in the home dressing-room at the end reflected the commitment shown in defence against a bigger, more physical unit.

Oxford were indebted to the accurate kicking of Booth, but it was Simon Danielli who provided the game's highlight after 79 minutes when he ran forwards, then backwards and sideways, through the middle and round Jorgenson on the outside to score a fabulous try. On a chilly November day, it was a memory to cherish.

A great winter of sport

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South Africa v West Indies	Wimbledon v Chelsea
Australia v England, second Test	Tottenham v Manchester Utd
Golf	Rugby Union
Pirella G&P Rey Europevan Cup	Northampton v Richmond
	England v Australia
	England v South Africa

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Alan Lee detects a positive approach on eve of first Test

Running against the course of history



McGrath, second from left, leads a formidable Australia attack alongside Kasparovic, Gillespie and Fleming. Photograph: Graham Chadwick/Allsport

THE will of the captain has prevailed over the instincts of the coach and England intend to start the first Test match against Australia, at midnight British time, without the insurance of a seventh specialist batsman. It is a positive move, admirable in intent, but its effect will be to intensify demands on opening batsmen with private demons to conquer.

Upbeat England turn to Croft

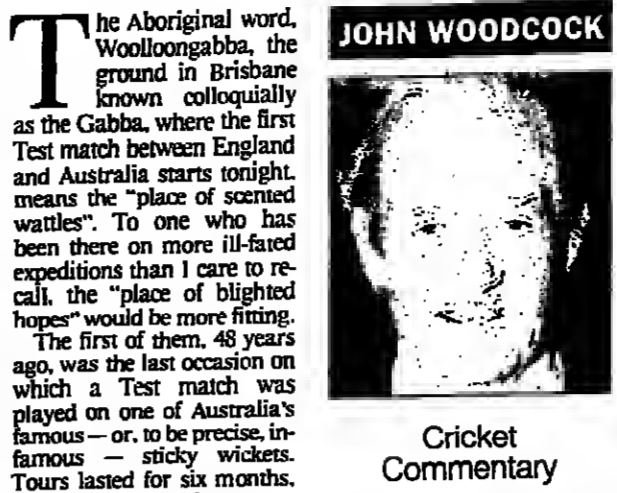
It has long been the preference of Alec Stewart to have five bowlers at his disposal when he takes charge of an Ashes Test for the first time and I understand that he will be given his wish, despite the deep reservations of David Lloyd, the coach, who favoured seven batsmen and a four-man seam attack.



England named their XI yesterday, an obvious choice that might as easily have been made a fortnight ago. However, since the latest discussion by the tour selectors — now temporarily augmented by David Graveney, the chairman — it has become clear that Robert Croft will win the contentious place in the side and that John Crawley will play only if Michael Atherton finally reports unfit.

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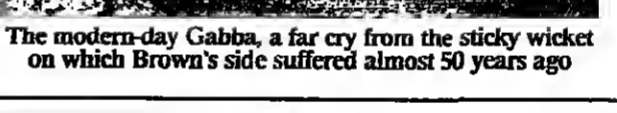
you do get on a roll, it will work in your favour." England's positive thinking is influenced in part by the knowledge that two Tests, at least, will be completed without Warne's wizardry. Stewart has previously stated his wish to play against an Australia side including the leg spinner, but he was shedding no tears for him yesterday.



Cricket Commentary

The Aboriginal word, Woolloongabba, the ground in Brisbane known colloquially as the Gabba, where the first Test match between England and Australia starts tonight, means the "place of scorned wattles". To one who has been there on more ill-fated expeditions than I care to recall, the "place of blighted hopes" would be more fitting.

gone, just as the game itself has changed from one of firm but friendly rivalry into something altogether trendier and more strenuous. It may make rich men of them, but I pity the modern players their relentless schedule.



The modern-day Gabba, a far cry from the sticky wicket on which Brown's side suffered almost 50 years ago

Advertisement for Bet on England to win the Ashes, without making a run. Includes details about the Ashes Series, Australia 2/9, Draw 9/2, England 7/1, and contact information for Bets Direct.

FOR THE RECORD

BASKETBALL

AUSTRALIA (front): M. Taylor (captain), M. J. Slater, J. Langer, M. E. Waugh, S. B. Waugh, R. P. Fulton, J. A. Healy, D. W. Fleming, R. Kasparovic, S. C. G. MacGill, G. O. McGrath.

FOOTBALL

ENGLAND (front): A. J. Stewart (captain), M. A. Atherton, M. A. Butcher, H. Hussey, O. P. Thorpe, M. H. Parsonage, R. G. Curran, C. D. Gough, A. H. C. Fraser, A. O'Malley.

THE RECORD

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP: Qualifying group three: Iceland 2-0, Norway 1-0, Sweden 1-0.

FOOTBALL

FRANCE (front): M. Deshayes, B. Lemerle, B. Barthelemy, D. Deshayes, B. Lemerle, B. Barthelemy.

Celtic agree fee for Mjallby

CELTIC have at last agreed a fee of around £1.5 million with Mjallby, the Swedish midfield player. Mjallby was finalising personal terms at Celtic Park yesterday and the protracted transfer should be completed in time for him to make his debut in the intense atmosphere of the Old Firm match against Rangers on Saturday.



Stubbs recovered

TODAY'S FIXTURES

FOOTBALL: AVON INSURANCE COMMARATOR: First division: Bristol Rovers v Northampton (7.30); Norwich v Luton (7.30).

TODAY'S FIXTURES

ICE HOCKEY: Helsinki Capitals v London Knights; New York Islanders v Philadelphia Flyers.

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TENNIS: NOVOTNA LIMS TO DEFEAT IN CHASE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Resurgent Graf finds fresh inspiration

SPENDING most of the year trotting to and from doctors, surgeons and physiotherapists is not the best way to prepare for a leading tournament. But as the rest of the field shows signs of tiredness, boredom and lethargy, Steffi Graf is fit and raring to go.

They began by seeing who had the nerve to skim the ball lowest over the net. Once on the other side of the court, if the ball bounced more than half an inch, the shot was considered to be an abject failure. This caused Graf a few problems until, in the second set, she decided that attack was the best form of defence and began to move forward. It made for some cracking points and some spectacular errors on both sides. It was all good entertainment until Novotna's cramp set in and Graf was home free.

and Schnyder has risen through the ranks, the Swiss press have commented that it is nice to see a real Swiss player doing so well. This has upset Hingis rather and it was Schnyder who took the full brunt of her annoyance.

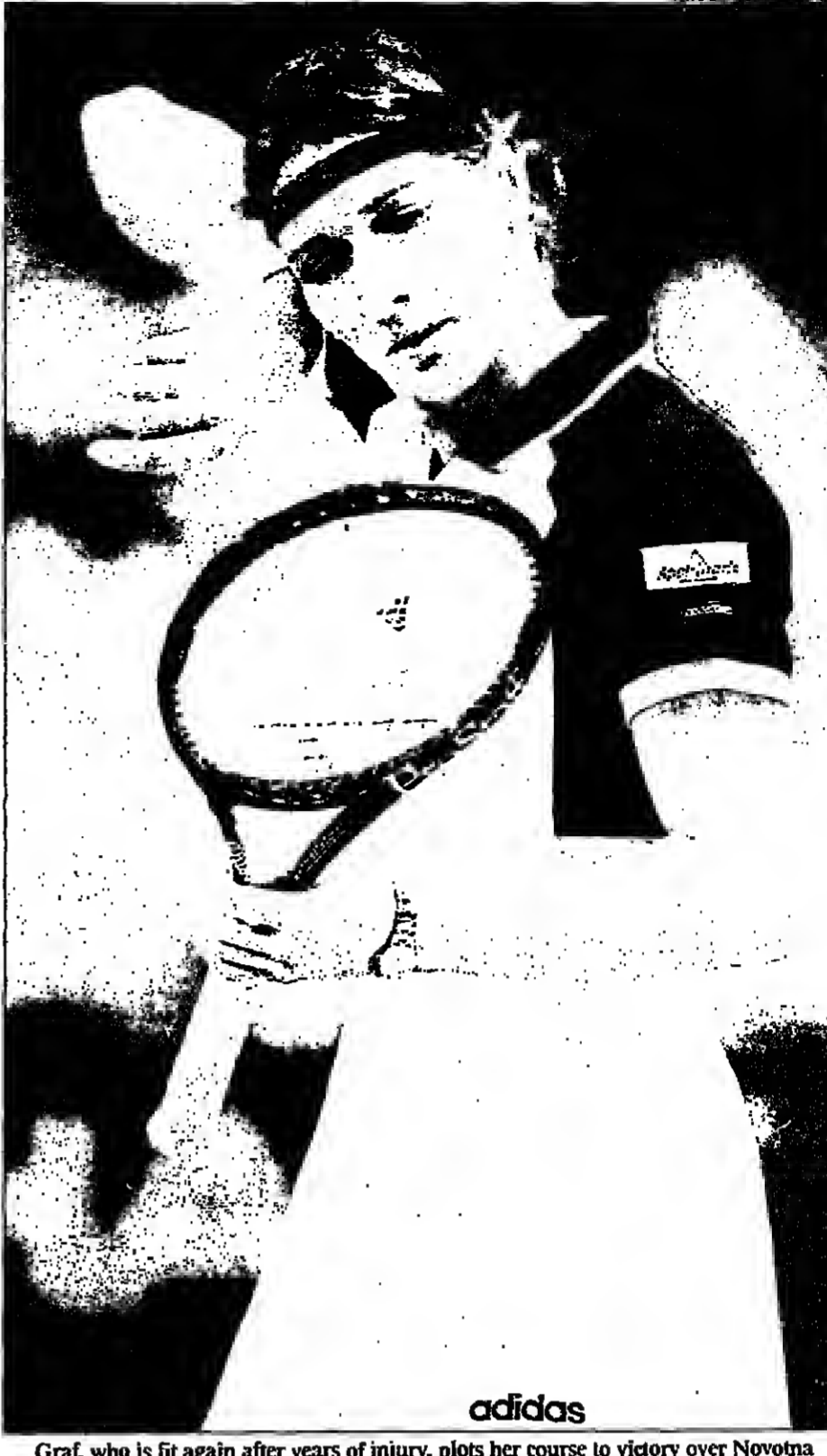


Richardson: surprise defeat

Richardson cut down to size

ANDREW RICHARDSON suffered yet another disappointment at the British national championships at Telford yesterday. The Lincolnshire player was beaten 2-6, 6-1, 6-3 in the second round of the singles by Paul Robinson, a fellow left-hander, who has given up full-time tennis to pursue a career in finance.

"It was a really nice gesture and it gave me back some motivation, but I'm only slowly coming back into it."



Graf, who is fit again after years of injury, plots her course to victory over Novotna

SPORT IN BRIEF

Leeds coup as Pratt moves on

RUGBY LEAGUE: Leeds Rhinos have signed Karl Pratt, 18, the high-scoring Great Britain Academy wing, after agreeing a substantial compensation payment with Featherstone Rovers, for whom Pratt scored 25 tries in 30 appearances in the southern division last season.

GOLF: Nick Faldo will compete in his first World Cup of Golf for seven years at Gulf Harbour in New Zealand, part of a plan to lift his world ranking.

REAL TENNIS: Steve Virgona easily defeated James Willcocks 3-0 in the second round of the British Lawn Open championship at Queen's Club and now meets Robert Fahey, the world champion, in the quarter-finals.

RUGBY UNION: Bedfordshire signed Joe Beardshaw and Richard Ward on short-term loan from Wasps and Gloucester respectively in an attempt to solve their second-row injury crisis.

GUIDE TO 1999 INTERNATIONAL AND COUNTY CRICKET FIXTURES

Innovations mark new season

THE World Cup in May and June next year offers the England and Wales Cricket Board the chance to market the game that it has craved since its inception in January 1997. Yet the restructuring of county cricket also bears the stamp of the marketing department.

The first-class season will have its earliest start and although the county championship remains untouched, there are notable innovations in the one-day game. There is a two-division, 45-overs-a-side national league to replace the AXA League, the 50-over Super Cup for the top eight teams in the county championship last year and an expanded NatWest Trophy, involving 60 teams and played over 50 rather than 60 overs.

West Trophy final is on a Sunday for the first time and has been brought forward to the end of August to counter problems caused by the 10.50am start in September. The expansion of the NatWest Trophy means that the first two rounds involve only the minor counties, Holford, Deans and the recently formed recreational teams from the first-class counties, which include club players and young, contracted professionals.

Table of cricket fixtures for April, including University matches and County Championship games.

Table of cricket fixtures for May, including County Championship and NatWest Trophy games.

Table of cricket fixtures for June, including County Championship and NatWest Trophy games.

Table of cricket fixtures for July, including County Championship and NatWest Trophy games.

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Football... Mjallby



SKIING 48 It's all downhill for Carrick-Anderson before World Cup

SPORT

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 19 1998

GOLF 50

Amateurs line up for grand final of Corporate Challenge



Wainwright among trio omitted for match against South Africa Telfer wields Scotland axe

By Mark Souster

THE contrast in fortunes of two flank forwards, one South African, the other Scottish, could not have been more marked yesterday.

Wainwright is not alone. Rowen Shepherd and Tony Stanger have also been culled from the side that lost to the New Zealand Maoris on Saturday.

Jim Telfer, the Scotland coach, who names his side tomorrow, made reassuring noises about the trio, saying that the door remained open.

Skinstad's irresistible form, both at home and on this tour, forced Nick Mallett, the South Africa coach, into what he admitted had been his most difficult selectorial decision so far.

Out goes Andre Venet, as well as Franco Smith, who is replaced by Christian Stewart at inside centre. At 32, Stewart wins his first cap for South Africa three years after his last for Canada.



Alan Tait displays a determined approach during the Scotland training session at Murrayfield yesterday. Photograph: David Rogers/Aisport

Neither Skinstad nor Stewart, both of Western Province, realistically felt that they could break into the international XV.

Mallett said that it had to be "now or never" for Skinstad on this tour, but also wondered whether the chemistry in such a close-knit team might be upset by the changes.

Would that Telfer enjoyed such luxuries. He justified the decision to drop Wainwright by saying that Scotland had lost Matthew Proudfoot and Gordon Simpson, two of their heaviest forwards, to long-term injuries and that the pack needed bolstering.

Scotland against France last year in the Five Nations Championship, has been in rumbustious form for Newcastle, having filled the void left by Pat Lam. His inclusion is, however, symptomatic of the contradictory messages coming out of the Scotland camp.

Wales changed all that. Telfer also expressed surprise at his rapid elevation only a fortnight after arriving in Scotland.

MURRAYFIELD TEAMS

SCOTLAND: Backs: G Armstrong (Newcastle Falcons), D Hodge (Edinburgh Ravens), D Lowe (London Scottish), J Leslie (Glasgow Caltonians), K Logan (Worcester), J Mayer (Edinburgh Ravens), C Murray (Edinburgh Ravens), B Redpath (Edinburgh Ravens), A Tait (Edinburgh Ravens), G Townsend (Glasgow Caltonians), S Girdle (Glasgow Caltonians), O Hogg (Edinburgh Ravens), S Murray (Edinburgh Ravens), S Murray (Edinburgh Ravens), E Palmer (Edinburgh Ravens), T Smith (Glasgow Caltonians), P Walton (Newcastle Falcons), G Weir (Newcastle Falcons).

SOUTH AFRICA: P Montgomery (Western Province), S Terrence (Boland), A Bryman (Blue Bulls), C Stewart (Western Province), P Rossouw (Western Province), H Honebein (Natal Sharks), J van der Westhuizen (Blue Bulls), R Kempson (Natal Sharks), J Dellow (Golden Lions), A Garvey (Natal Sharks), K Osis (Blue Bulls), M Andrews (Natal Sharks), J Erasmus (Free State), R Skelton (WP), G Tschirner (Natal Sharks, captain), R Pienaar (Griquas), G du Toit (Griquas West), F Smith (Blue Bulls), W Swaneepoel (Free State), G Krieger (Western Province), A Vermeir (Free State), G La Rue (Natal Sharks), N Drottske (Free State).

O'Sullivan is forced out by depression

By Phil Yates

SNOOKER'S finest natural talent, Ronnie O'Sullivan, who has been in the depths of depression over his form and the game in general for some time, will not defend his Liverpool Victoria United Kingdom championship title in Bournemouth.

O'Sullivan, 22, withdrew yesterday from the event suffering from "physical and mental exhaustion". Ian Doyle, his manager, said: "Ronnie's doctor has ordered a complete rest from snooker."

"Ronnie is desperately disappointed that he won't be able to play, but, at the moment, his health must come first. In my opinion, he will be out until February." If Doyle's assessment is correct, O'Sullivan will also miss the German Masters, Irish Open, Nations' Cup, Regal Welsh Open and possibly the Benson and Hedges Masters.

John Read, from Wolverhampton, the world No 70, who received a walkover into the second round because of O'Sullivan's absence, publicly echoed the sentiments of many other players.

Regularly downbeat press conferences, even those conducted immediately after he has lifted a trophy, have increasingly pointed to O'Sullivan's unhappiness. Even victory in the Regal Scottish Masters, the first leading event of the season six weeks ago, failed to lift his personal gloom.

Over the course of the past year or so, O'Sullivan has repeatedly threatened to retire. He has insisted he is "only in snooker for the money" and that "I wouldn't mind if I never picked up a cue again". During the recent Grand Prix, O'Sullivan was adamant that he "hated the game" and was unperturbed by defeat.

Ironically, the matter has come to a head at the United Kingdom championship, a gathering that thrust O'Sullivan to national prominence in 1993, when, still a week short of his 18th birthday, he became the youngest player to triumph in a world-ranking tournament.

During a pre-championship media day only nine days ago, with representatives of the

sponsor present, O'Sullivan predicted that he would probably lose his opening match 9-0 or 9-1.

Parallels will inevitably be drawn between O'Sullivan's problems and those encountered by other sportsmen and women pushed into the spotlight at a tender age.

The diagnosis fits, but, in this case, it is simplistic. O'Sullivan's mental welfare has undoubtedly been affected by the life sentence imposed on his father, Ronnie Sr, for murder in 1992, only a couple of months after he turned professional.

At the 1996 world championship, O'Sullivan was fined £20,000 for physically assaulting an official; in June, he was forced to forfeit the £61,300



O'Sullivan: exhaustion

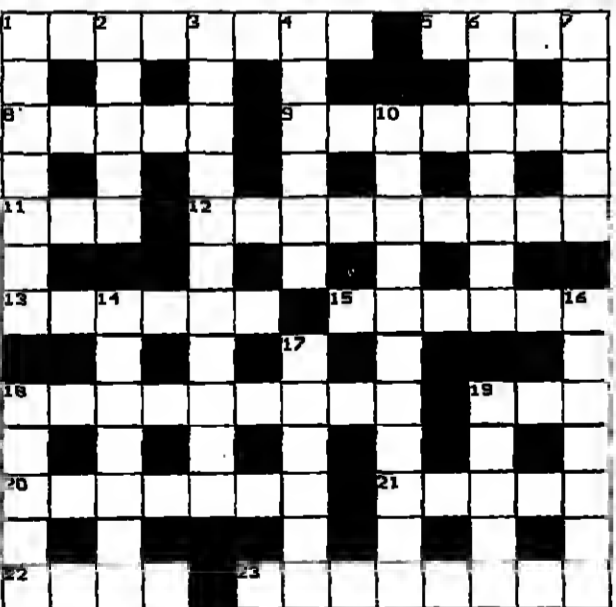
first prize from the Benson and Hedges Irish Masters after traces of marijuana were discovered in a urine test taken at the event.

Doyle, who said that O'Sullivan's condition was unrelated to alcohol or drugs, said: "This has been building up in Ronnie for a while and it's systematic of the situation he's had to face up to over the past six years."

Few would argue that O'Sullivan possesses the skill to become world champion, but whether he has the necessary temperament now is seriously questioned.

As one of snooker's most popular figures and entertaining stylists, O'Sullivan will be sorely missed from the UK championship. Seven members of the top 16 have already fallen at the first hurdle, including such notable players as Alan McManus, Peter Ebdon, James Wattana and Tony Drago.

TWO CROSSWORD



No 1567

- ACROSS: 1 Tolerating (8), 5 Mound (4), 8 Castle mound (5), 9 Onegin, Godunov poet (7), 11 Chance: large amount (5), 12 An indigenous person (9), 13 Given name, new sound-track (6), 15 One having to live abroad (6), 18 One taking the blame (9), 19 Hostility (5), 20 (Look) sideways, disapprovingly (7), 21 Diver's breathing pack (5), 22 Spick as opposed to bean (4), 23 Good-looking (8).

- SOLUTION TO NO 1566: ACROSS: 1 Cavil 7 Ethical 8 Parquet 9 Overact 11 Drench 13 Hankering 15 John Wayne 19 Guffaw 21 Forbids 23 Isotope 24 Handbag 25 Yodel. DOWN: 1 Cypid 2 Vortex 3 Launch 4 Veto 5 Mirror 6 Balcony 10 Viking 12 Hazard 14 Potomac 16 Nobody 17 Eulogy 18 Afford 20 Wheel 22 Sign.

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United directors prepare for supporters' verbal assault

By Stephen Wood

IF IT was designed as a test of their public relations skills, Manchester United plc would have failed miserably long ago. The imminent takeover of United, by BSkyB, has angered a section of the club's support, an awkward situation that has been made worse because of their marginalisation in the deal's process.

Hundreds of shareholders are expected at the Manchester Suite of United's Old Trafford stadium, with an avid interest in the club's annual meeting (AGM). The subject of the takeover is not on the official agenda, but it is likely that every director of the plc board will be fully briefed in anticipation of a stormy meeting.

Many of supporters are opposed to the £623 million takeover and the number of complaints received by the Office of Fair Trading led to the buy-out being referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The deal is still expected to go through, but the AGM represents the first time that fans can meet directors face-to-face since the board recommended acceptance of the bid.

Andy Walsh, the chairman of the Independent Manchester United Supporters' Association (IMUSA), said: "The dis-

dain with which the board have treated the fans and other shareholders has been staggering. No one has explained why the takeover will be good for United, no one has explained what BSkyB can do for the club that it can't do for itself. We want answers to these questions and more."

The meeting will be chaired by Sir Roland Smith, the chairman of the plc, but Martin Edwards, the chairman of the football club, will not be required to speak. Edwards, though, may not escape the wrath of the fans.

Walsh said: "Martin Edwards has said he is willing to

make it clear to us why this deal should go ahead, but we have invited him to two public debates and he turned down both. We want to know why we can't have a proper discussion about the future of the club."

Edwards usually holds one-on-one sessions with the shareholders at the end of formal business and he is expected to repeat the line of response that he has already proffered when the question of the takeover is raised. Recently, he said: "I think there has been a misconception about this issue, but it has become a personal issue, but I would like to remind people

that it was not my decision in isolation."

There were more problems of communication at United yesterday. Andy Cole, having criticised Glenn Hoddle, the England coach, for the way in which Hoddle left him out of the friendly against the Czech Republic last night, attracted rumours that he would never be called up again while Hoddle is in charge of the national team.

Cole, the striker, was unhappy that Hoddle did not consult him personally about the issue and Paul Stretford, the player's business manager, said: "If Hoddle would call Andy and talk to him man-to-man, Andy would be happy to take that call."

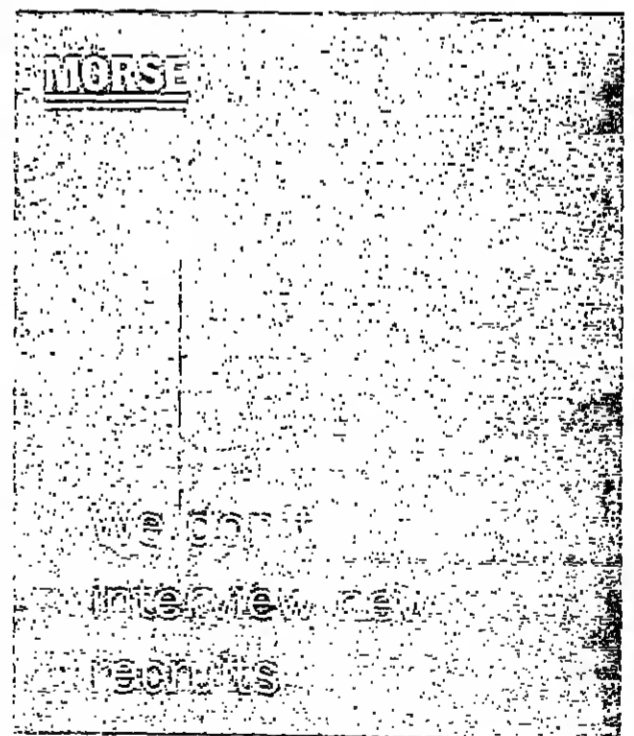
"At the moment, Andy has decided to stand up for himself because that is not the first time Hoddle has made disparaging remarks about him. He has made it clear that Andy will not be ready for international football for up to 18 months, so it looks like Glenn has made his mind up about Andy. Our decision to make our feelings known, therefore, may not influence anything."

The manager is entitled to make any decision in terms of selection of his squad, but it oversteps the mark when he makes personal observations about a player's ability who, if you look at that record, shows those observations to be completely unfounded."



Cole is still on the goal trail despite Hoddle's misgivings

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